

ORIGINAL EC COMICS FROM THE 1950s!



NO. 20
JULY



250
345
CANADA

H
O
R
R
O
R

THE VAULT OF HORROR®

FEATURING...



THE VAULT-KEEPER



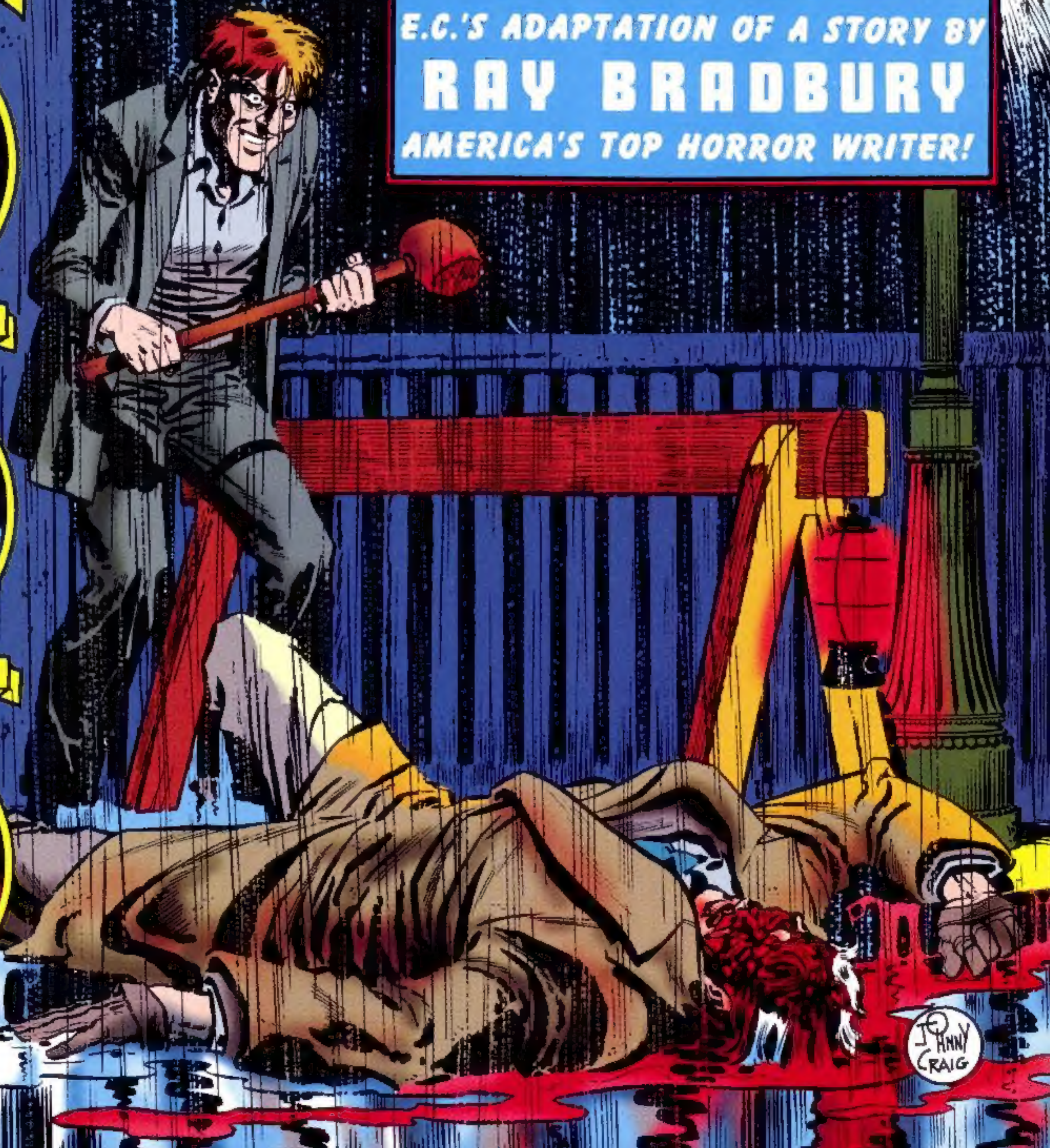
THE CRYPT-KEEPER



THE OLD WITCH

IN THIS ISSUE:

E.C.'S ADAPTATION OF A STORY BY
RAY BRADBURY
AMERICA'S TOP HORROR WRITER!



JOHN
CRAIG

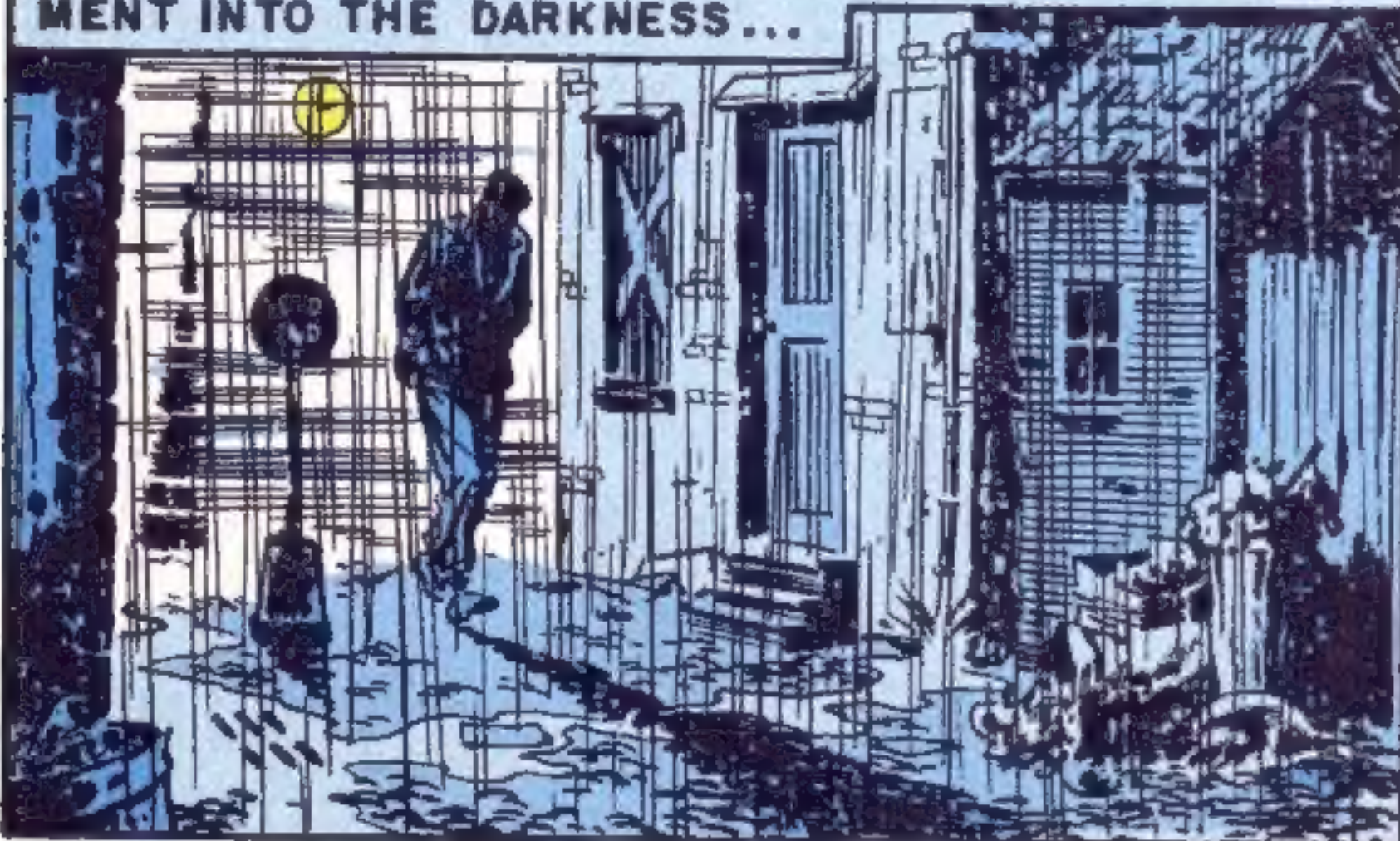
THE VAULT OF HORROR!

HEH, HEH! THANK HADES, YOU'RE ON TIME. I HAVE BEEN EAGERLY AWAITING YOUR ARRIVAL... FOR AFTER MUCH SCROUNGING AROUND IN THE DEEPEST RECESSES OF THE VAULT, I DISCOVERED AN ANCIENT AND CRUMBLING VOLUME WHICH CONTAINED A CLASSIC TALE. I'M CERTAIN YOU WILL ENJOY THIS ONE, SO SETTLE YOUR SKELETON AND PREPARE FOR A TRULY MORBID AND IRONIC STORY ENTITLED...

EASEL KILL YA!



THE MISERABLE WRETCH WANDERED AIMLESSLY THROUGH SILENT, FOGGY STREETS. HISSING RAIN-DROPS PELTED HIS UNCOVERED HEAD, RAN DOWN HIS FACE, MINGLING WITH TEARS. TOWERING STREET LAMPS FORMED HIS SHADOW INTO GROTESQUE SHAPES ON SOLEMN BUILDINGS, PAINLESSLY ELONGATED IT TO EXPLORE ALONG THE WET, SHIMMERING PAVEMENT INTO THE DARKNESS...



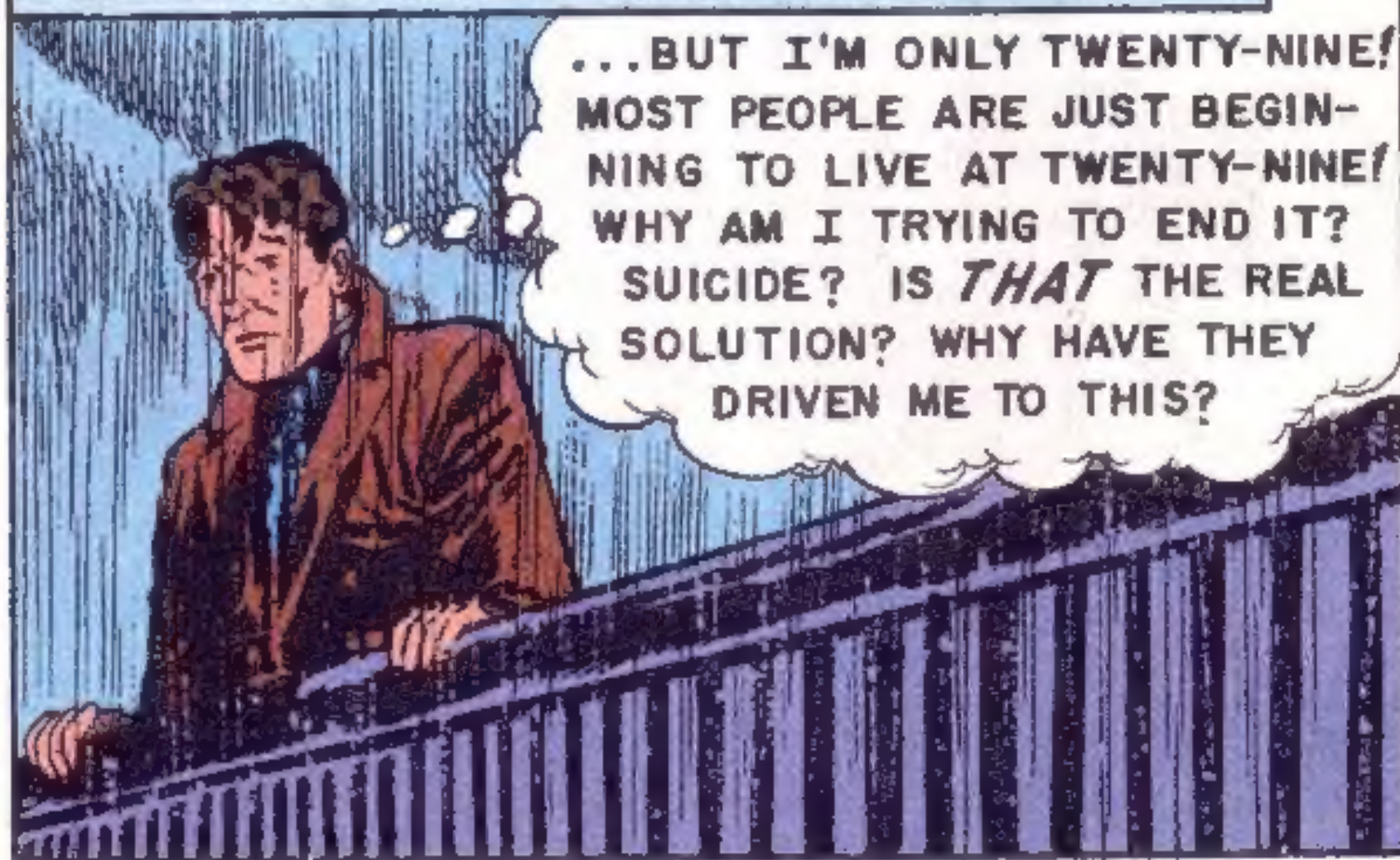
RAINWATER GURGLED ANGRILY IN THE GUTTER, REACHED OUT, CAUGHT, AND CARRIED EVERYTHING IT COULD WITH IT INTO THE SEWER DEPTHS. THE MISERABLE WRETCH SHUFFLED ON, AND ONCE, AN AGONIZED SOB ERUPTED FROM HIS LIPS TO BE SNATCHED AWAY BY THE WIND...



HIS FOOTSTEPS CARRIED HIM OUT ON THE BRIDGE. HE GRIPPED THE RAIL WITH TREMBLING, WHITENED KNUCKLES, STARED UNSEEING INTO THE BLACKNESS AT THE WATER HE KNEW WAS SOMEWHERE BELOW, AND LISTENED TO THE VICIOUS WHISPERINGS OF THE RAIN...



HE STOOD THERE FOR LONG MINUTES, THINKING A MILLION THOUGHTS, SEEING A MILLION VISIONS, RECALLING A MILLION MEMORIES...



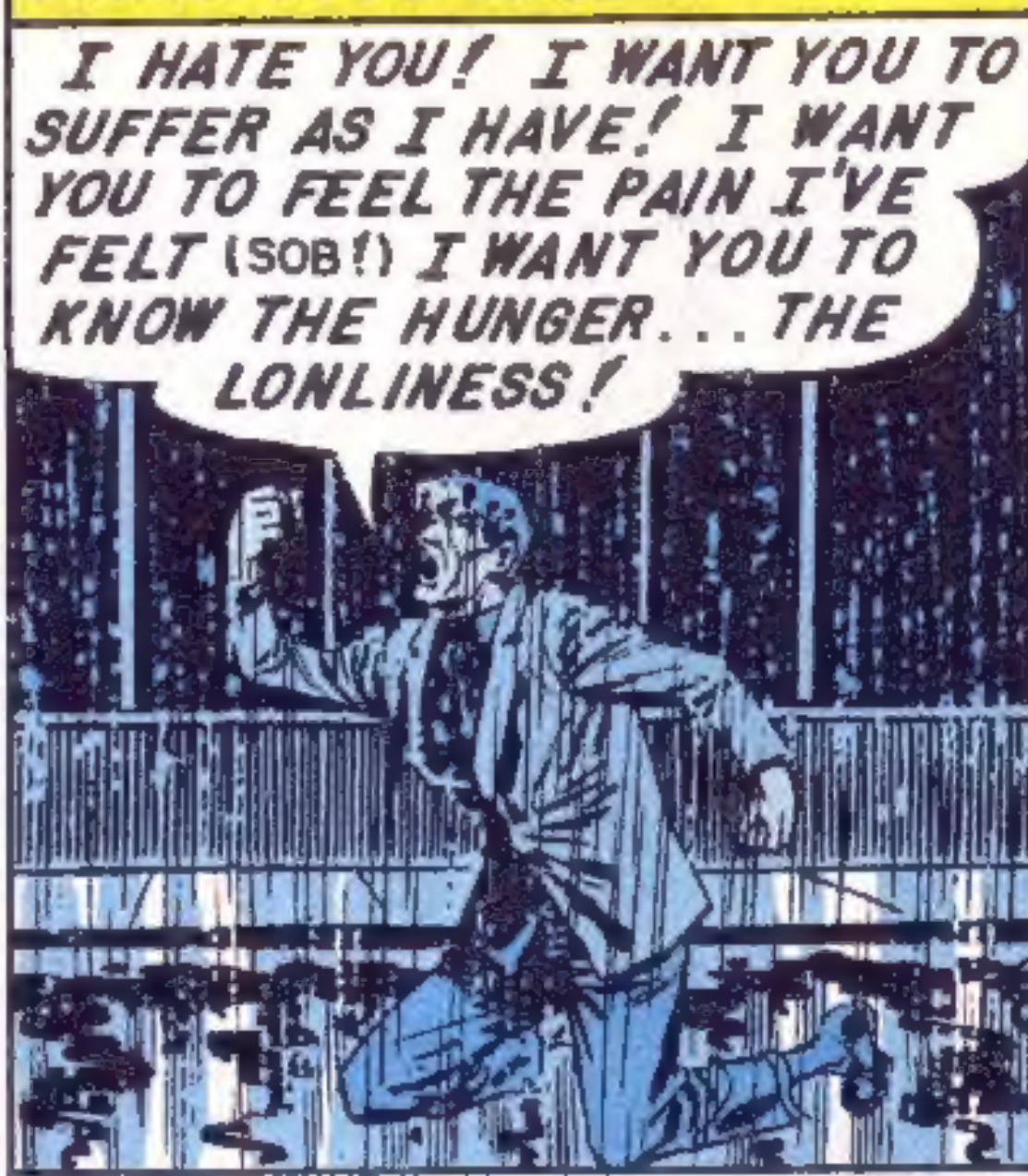
A SPARKLING BUBBLE OF FEMALE LAUGHTER IN A PASSING TAXI, GONE IN AN INSTANT. HE WHIRLED AT THE SOUND...



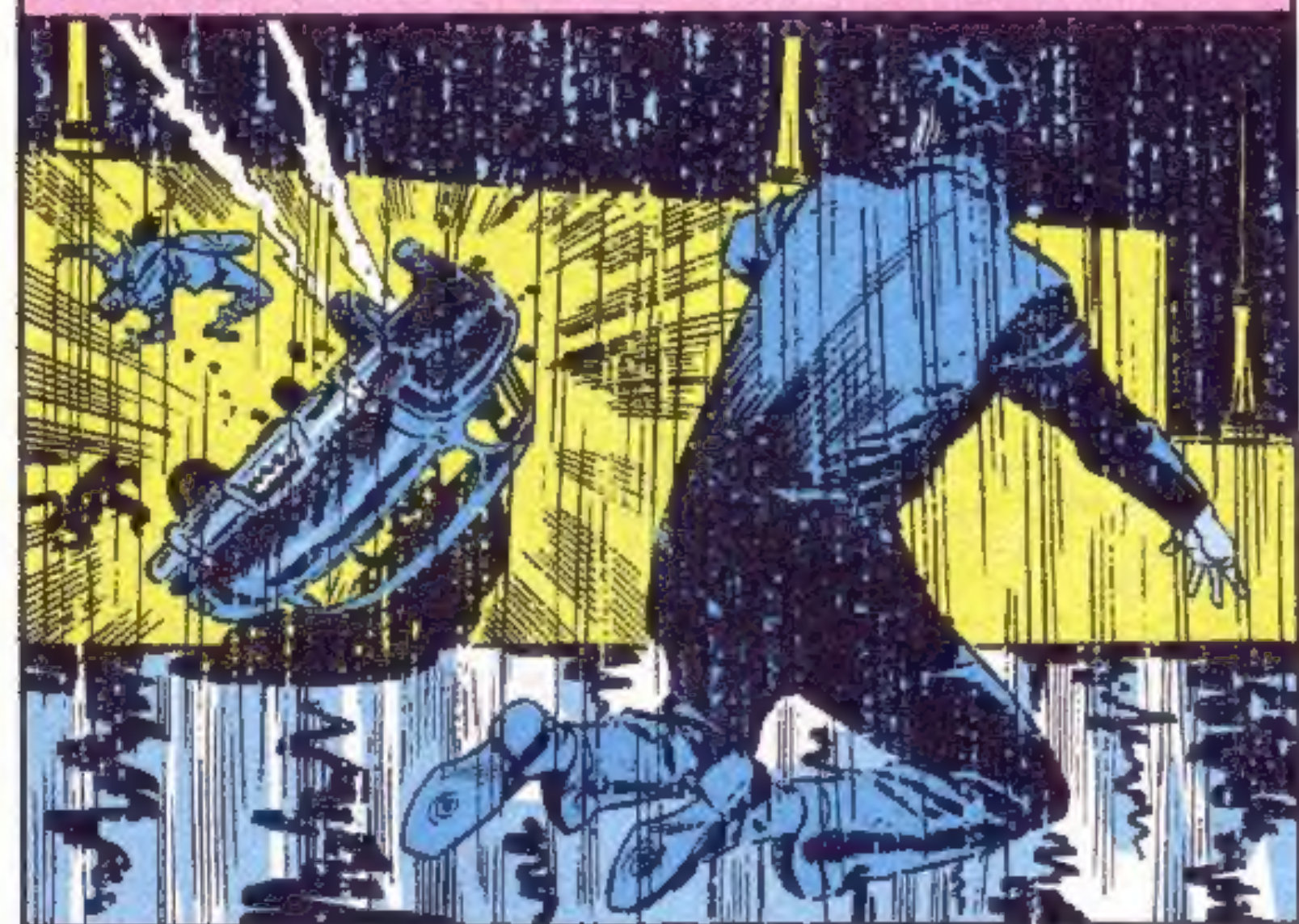
HE STUMBLED INTO THE ROADWAY ON WATERY LEGS...



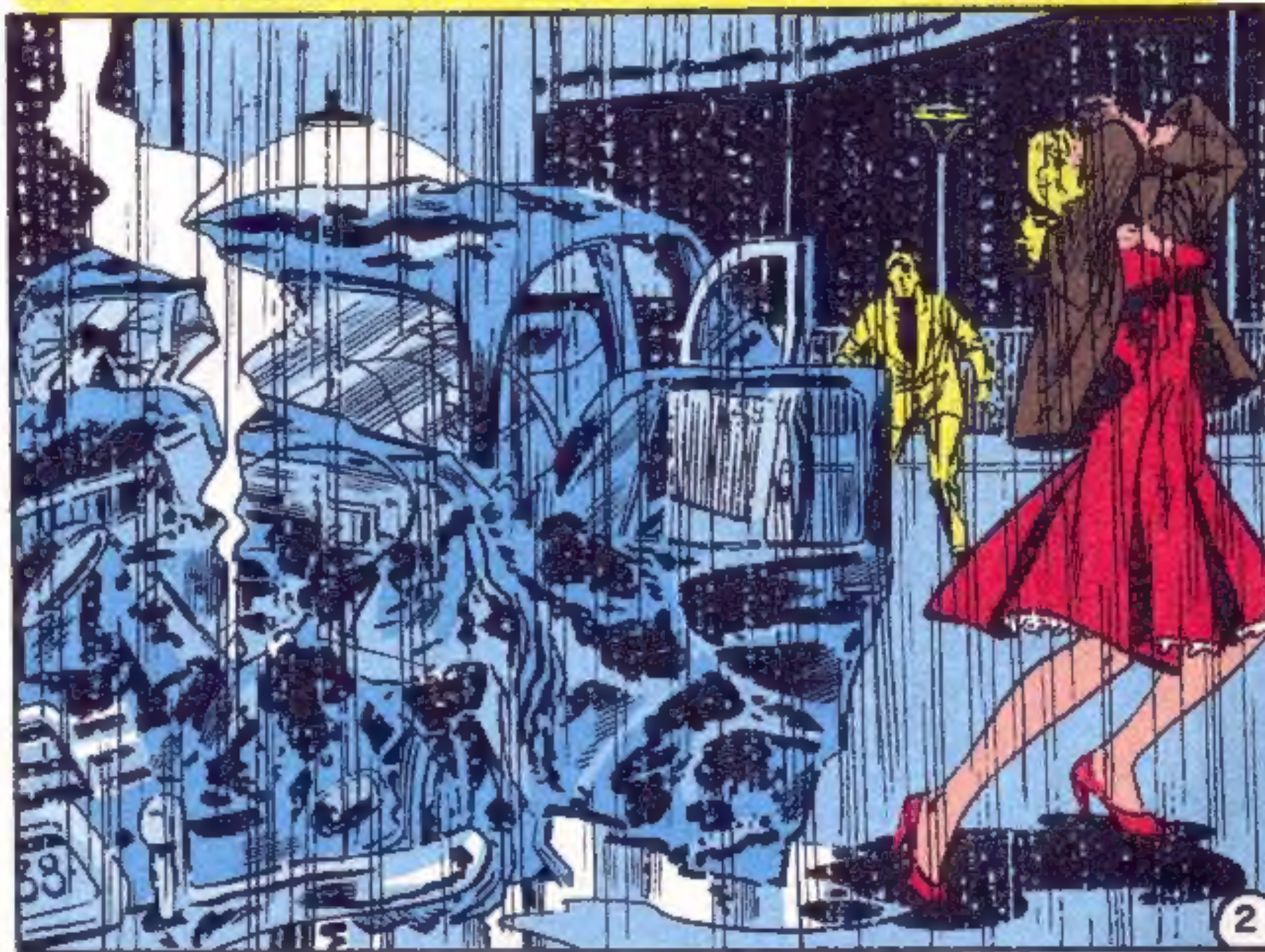
HE CRUMPLED TO HIS KNEES IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROAD, FIST RAISED SHAKILY IN DEFIANCE...



HE WAS ONLY DIMLY AWARE OF THE MOTOR'S ROAR BEHIND HIM, ONLY HALF-HEARD THE COMPLAINING SQUEAL OF TIRES SKIDDING ON SLIPPERY PAVEMENT, BUT HE CLEARLY SAW THE CAR BULLET PAST HIM, SPIN OUT OF CONTROL, FLIP OVER! HE SAW THE BODY THROWN IN THE AIR, HEARD IT STRIKE THE GROUND, MEMORIZED THE SOUND. HE LISTENED TO THE CACOPHONY OF GRINDING METAL AND SHATTERING GLASS, FELT THE JARRING IMPACT AS THE AUTO SLAMMED AGAINST THE CONCRETE BARRIER!



THE WOMAN TUMBLED FROM THE ACCORDIONED MACHINE, PLATINUM HAIR NOW TINTED RED, FLESH ONCE POWDER-WHITE NOW WINE-COLORED! DELICATE, JEWELLED FINGERS CLUTCHED HER FACE, CHANGED COLOR WITH THE STREAMING BLOOD THAT STAINED HER CLOTHES, DRIPPED TO THE GROUND AND FUSED, DISSOLVED WITH THE FROLICKING GUTTER WATER. SHE TEETERED DRUNKENLY... AND FELL!



HE RAN, LAUGHING, FROM THE SCENE. IT WAS GOOD TO KNOW THAT OTHERS COULD FEEL PAIN, COULD SUFFER AND DIE! IT FILLED HIM WITH A DEEP SATISFACTION. HE WAS OVERJOYED, ELATED, *INSPIRED!* BABBLING TO HIMSELF, HE CLIMBED THE RICKETY STAIRS TO HIS ROOM WHERE HE PAINTED FURIOUSLY, ENTRANCED, THROUGHOUT THE REMAINDER OF THE NIGHT...



THE COLD, BLEAK LIGHT OF MORNING FOUND THE ARTIST SITTING DUMBLY ON HIS COT, STARING WITH REDDENED EYES AT THE FINISHED PAINTING...



IT'S *GOOD*. THE BEST I'VE EVER DONE... BUT THE SUBJECT IS SO *DESPICABLE!* I KNOW OF ONLY ONE PERSON WHO WOULD EVEN *LOOK* AT SUCH A PICTURE... AND LIKE IT!

SOME TIME LATER THE ARTIST SPOKE EXCITEDLY WITH A SMALL, LECHEROUS OLD MAN WHOSE GIMLET EYES RAVAGED THE PAINTING...

THEN... YOU *LIKE* IT? YOU'LL *BUY* IT?!

IT'S MAGNIFICENT! HEH! PROFOUNDLY FILTHY, YET MAGNIFICENT! I'LL GIVE YOU A HUNDRED DOLLARS FOR IT!



ONE HUNDRED DOLLARS IS A LOT OF MONEY TO A PAUPER, BUT WITH RENT TO PAY, CLOTHES AND PAINTS TO BUY, AND AN EMPTY BELLY TO BE FILLED, IT DOESN'T LAST LONG...

...MONEY'S ALMOST GONE! HO-HUM, GUESS I'D BETTER KNOCK OFF ANOTHER SADISTIC PAINTING FOR THE OLD MAN!



BRUSHES IN HAND, HE STOOD BEFORE THE EASEL, STRAINING FOR AN IDEA. THE GREATER PART OF A DAY WENT BY, AND STILL HIS CANVAS WAS BLANK...

IT'S *NO USE!* I THOUGHT I'D BE ABLE TO TURN OUT ANOTHER PICTURE WITH EASE, BUT I CAN'T! I'VE BEEN FOOLING MYSELF!



HE SLUMPED TO HIS COT, LET THE BRUSHES SLIP FROM HIS FINGERS AND CLATTER TO THE FLOOR. HE FOUGHT TO HOLD BACK THE TEARS OF RAGE AND RESENTMENT THAT WELLED WITHIN HIM...

FOR A WHILE I THOUGHT I WAS BEING RECOGNIZED AS AN ARTIST... AS A PERSON, A HUMAN BEING! BUT I WAS WRONG.



ONE OLD MAN LIKES MY WORK. ONE OLD MAN WITH A DISEASED MIND LIKED THE SINFUL, WICKED PICTURE INSPIRED BY THE BLOOD AND PAIN I SAW IN THAT AUTO ACCIDENT. AND THE REST OF THE WORLD SHUNS ME!

BUT WAIT! THEY'D FEEL DIFFERENTLY IF I WERE A SUCCESS. IF I HAD MONEY THEY WOULDN'T TURN FROM ME. THEY'D LOOK UP TO ME, SMILE AT ME. THEY'D WANT TO TALK TO ME, NOT RUN FROM MY SIGHT. AND THEY'D GATHER 'ROUND ME AND THRILL JUST TO TOUCH MY HAND. THEY'D GROVEL AT MY FEET AND PLEAD WITH ME TO CAST THEM A *GLANCE*... A *WORD*! ALL THIS IF I HAD *MONEY*.

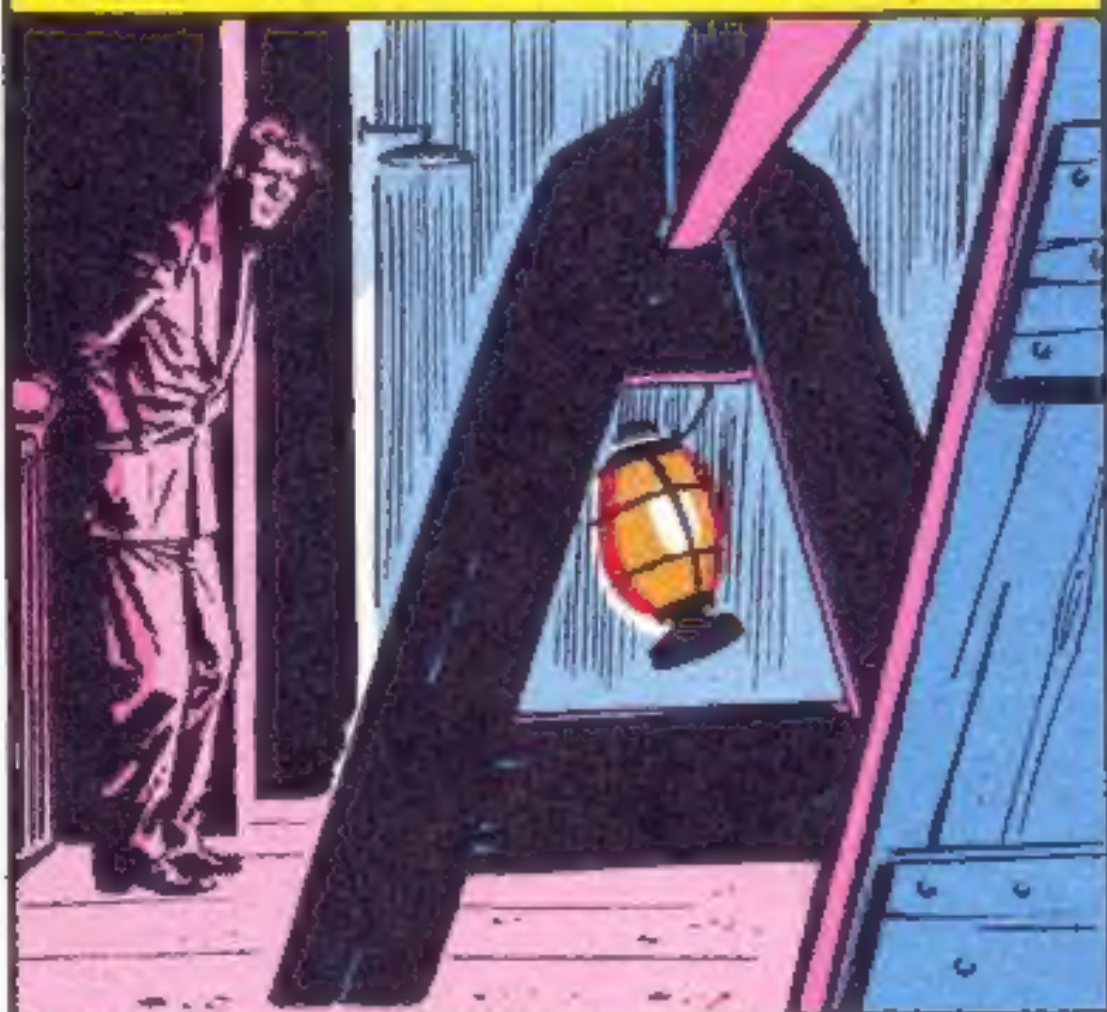


A BLACK REALIZATION ILLUMINATED HIS FACE...

MONEY. I CAN GET MONEY... FROM THE OLD MAN! HE'LL BUY PAINTINGS FROM ME IF THEY'RE LIKE THE OTHER ONE. AND IF I HAVE TO WATCH THEIR BLOOD SPILL AND SEE THEIR AGONY TO GET INSPIRATION... ALL THE BETTER! I *LIKE* TO SEE OTHER PEOPLE IN PAIN!



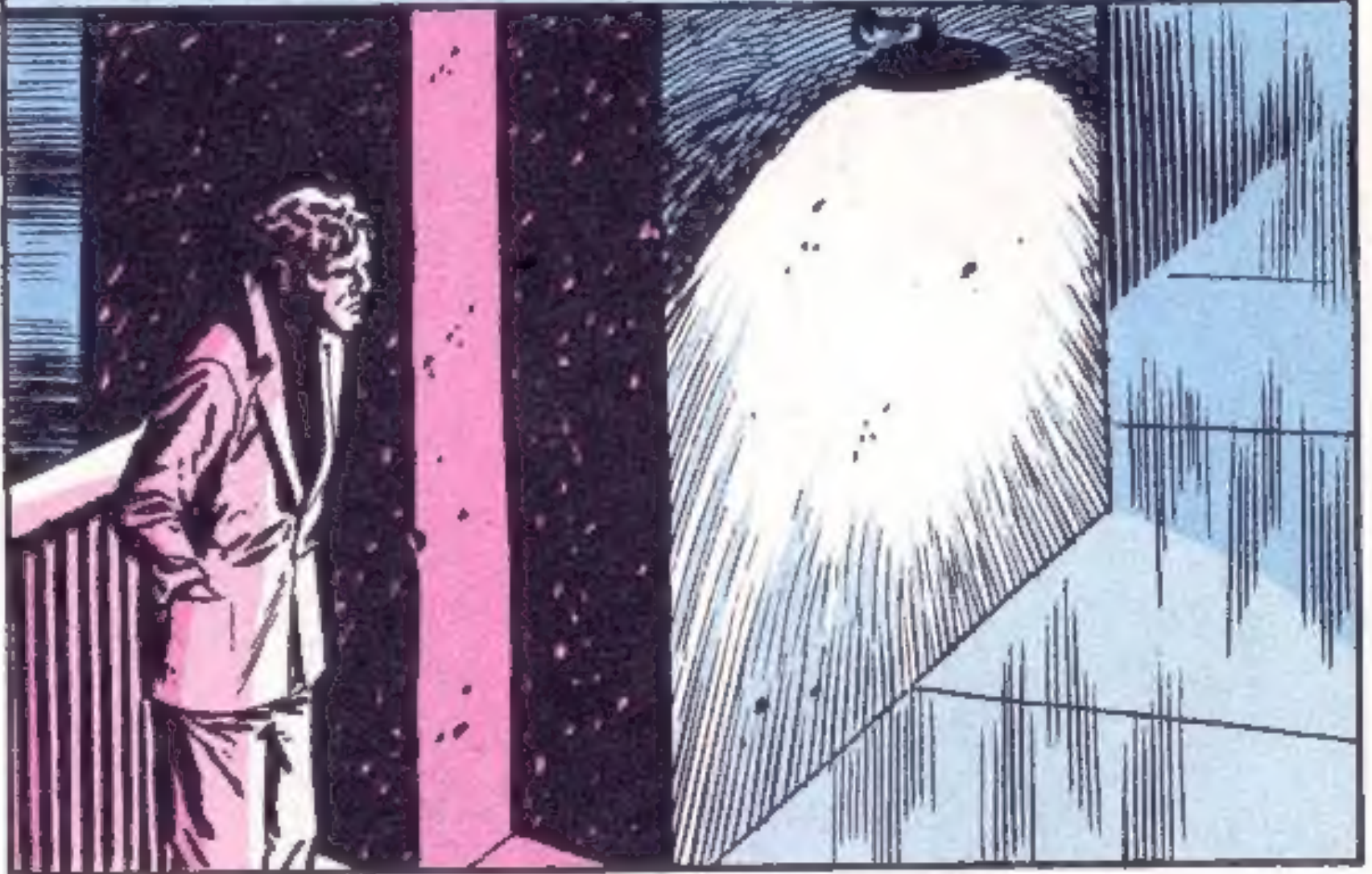
HE LOOKED AT THE DETOUR SIGNS WITH THEIR RED LANTERNS, USED TO RE-ROUTE TRAFFIC WHILE THE SMASHED AUTO HAD BEEN CLEARED AWAY. HE LOOKED AT THEM STANDING IDLY, INNOCENTLY ON THE WALK...AND THE HOURS SLIPPED BY...



IT WAS ALMOST MIDNIGHT WHEN, IN DESPAIR, HE LEFT THE BRIDGE TO PROWL THE STREETS. *SOMEWHERE* IN THE CITY THERE MUST BE ANGUISH AND BLOODSHED. WHY DID THEY *HIDE* IT FROM HIM? WHY DID THEY FRUSTRATE AND TORMENT HIM SO? HE *MUST* FIND INSPIRATION...



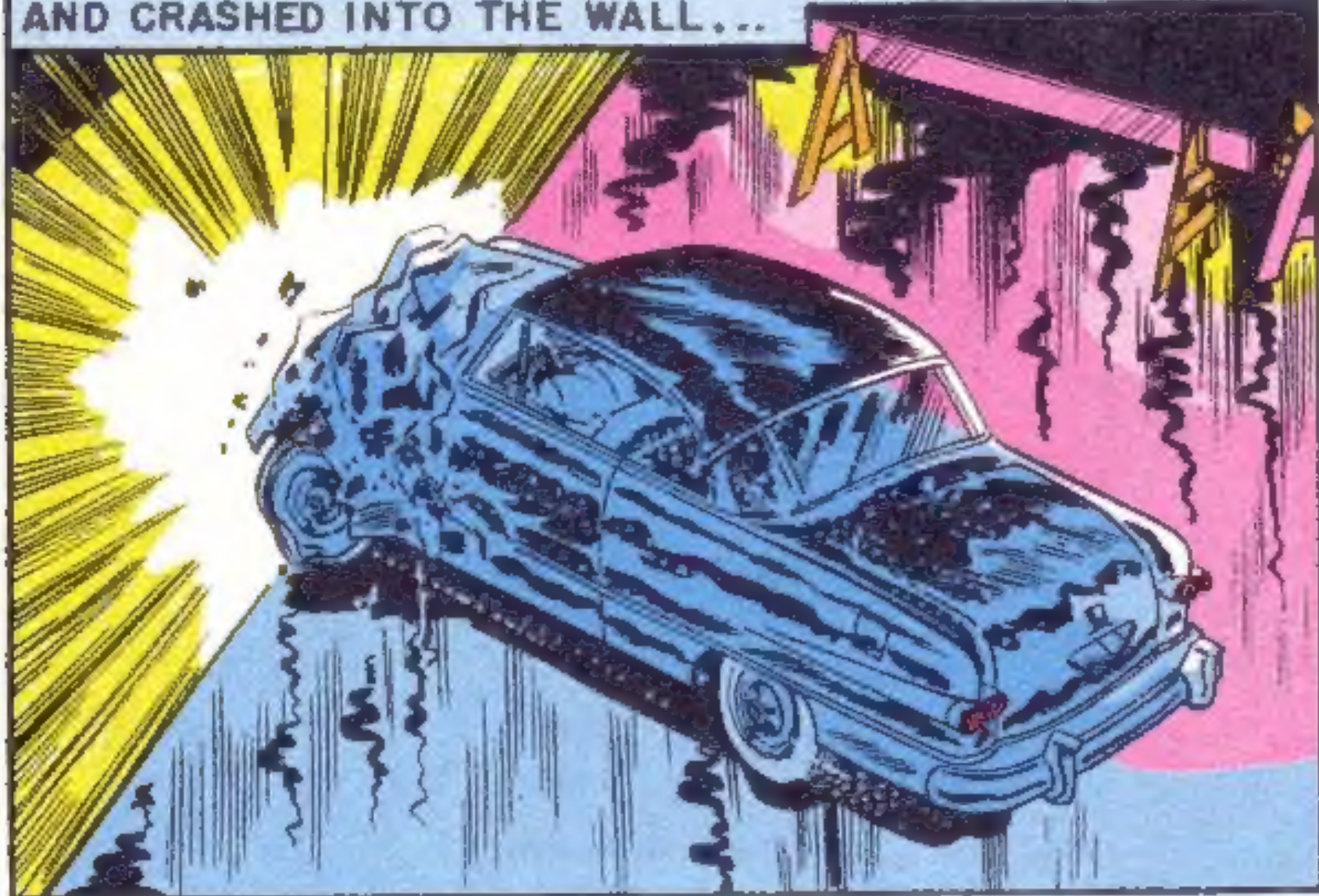
THE EVENING FOG CLOSED IN AROUND THE HUNCHED FIGURE STANDING ON THE BRIDGE. ALL EVIDENCE OF THE PREVIOUS ACCIDENT HAD LONG SINCE BEEN REMOVED, BUT THE ARTIST WAITED FOR HOURS... HOPING, PRAYING THAT ANOTHER ACCIDENT WOULD SOMEHOW MIRACULOUSLY OCCUR...



AT THREE A.M. HE AGAIN TRUDGED OUT ON THE BRIDGE. THE CITY HAD SUCCESSFULLY HID ITS SINS FROM HIM THUS FAR, BUT HE WAS NOT TO BE PUT OFF. HE LIFTED THE DETOUR SIGNS AND SET THEM IN THE ROAD, ANGLING THEM TOWARD THE BARRIER...



HE HAD TO WAIT BUT A SHORT WHILE BEFORE HE HEARD THE HUMMING OF TIRES ON MOIST PAVEMENT DRAWING RAPIDLY NEAR. THE CAR ROCKETED OUT OF THE FOG AND WITH A SCREECHING OF BRAKES, SWERVED TO AVOID THE SIGNS! HE LAUGHED DIABOLICALLY AS IT CAREENED AND CRASHED INTO THE WALL...



HE RACED TO THE WRECKAGE AND PEERED INSIDE, LAUGHING AS HE SAW THE BROKEN BODIES, FLOWING BLOOD. HE REJOICED IN THE MOANS AND SCREAMS, DANCED MERRILY AND CLAPPED HIS HANDS AND LAUGHED TILL HIS HEAD SPUN IN A WHIRLPOOL OF SUBLIME INSPIRATION...



MORNING. EXHAUSTION. THE FINISHED PAINTING, THE OLD MAN CACKLING AND GIVING HIM MONEY... DELIRIUM...

POSITIVELY FANTASTIC! HEH, HEH! SUCH SADISTIC LUST! YOU MUST PAINT *MORE* OF THESE FOR ME! I'LL PAY YOU *WELL*!



NIGHT. THE FOG-SHROUDED BRIDGE. CONFUSED, HATEFUL EMOTIONS AND THE IMPATIENCE OF WAITING. THE DECISION TO WAIT NO LONGER FOR AN ACCIDENT. THE SHEER THRILL OF VICIOUSLY BEATING A PASSERBY.



HIS ROOM. THE STRAW COT. FEELING AGAIN THE WARM BLOOD, HEARING AGAIN THE TERRIFIED CRIES, RELIVING THE ENTIRE EXPERIENCE... BUT *PAINTING NOTHING*! NOT CARING TO PAINT. JUST REVELING IN THE GLORIOUS SATISFACTION...



MORNING AGAIN... A BLANK CANVAS... AND A REALIZATION.

OH, GOD, I MUST BE *INSANE*! IS MY MIND SO TWISTED THAT I CAUSE BLOOD TO FLOW MERELY FOR THE THRILL I DERIVE FROM ITS SIGHT? AM I SO ENVIOUS OF THE WORLD THAT I REJOICE IN THEIR SUFFERING? WHEN IT INSPIRED A PAINTING, THERE WAS A *PURPOSE*... BUT NOW... NOW MY DEPRAVITY HAS REACHED ITS LOWEST DEPTHS! I'VE GOT TO *STOP* THIS MADNESS!



FOR DAYS HE REMAINED IN HIS SHABBY ROOM TRYING TO STIFLE THE URGE TO HURT SOMEONE, TRYING TO FORGET THE SATISFACTION HE RECEIVED FROM PUNISHING THE WORLD AS THE WORLD HAD SO OFTEN PUNISHED HIM...



HE PACED THE SMALL FLOOR, ANIMAL-LIKE, SMOKED ENDLESS CHAINS OF CIGARETTES, DRANK HIMSELF INTO A STUPOR, AND STILL HE FELT THE NEED FOR RELEASE... STILL HE HEARD THE OLD MAN'S PLEAS FOR MORE PICTURES, FELT THE OLD MAN'S MONEY, DREAMED OF THE THINGS HE COULD BUY...



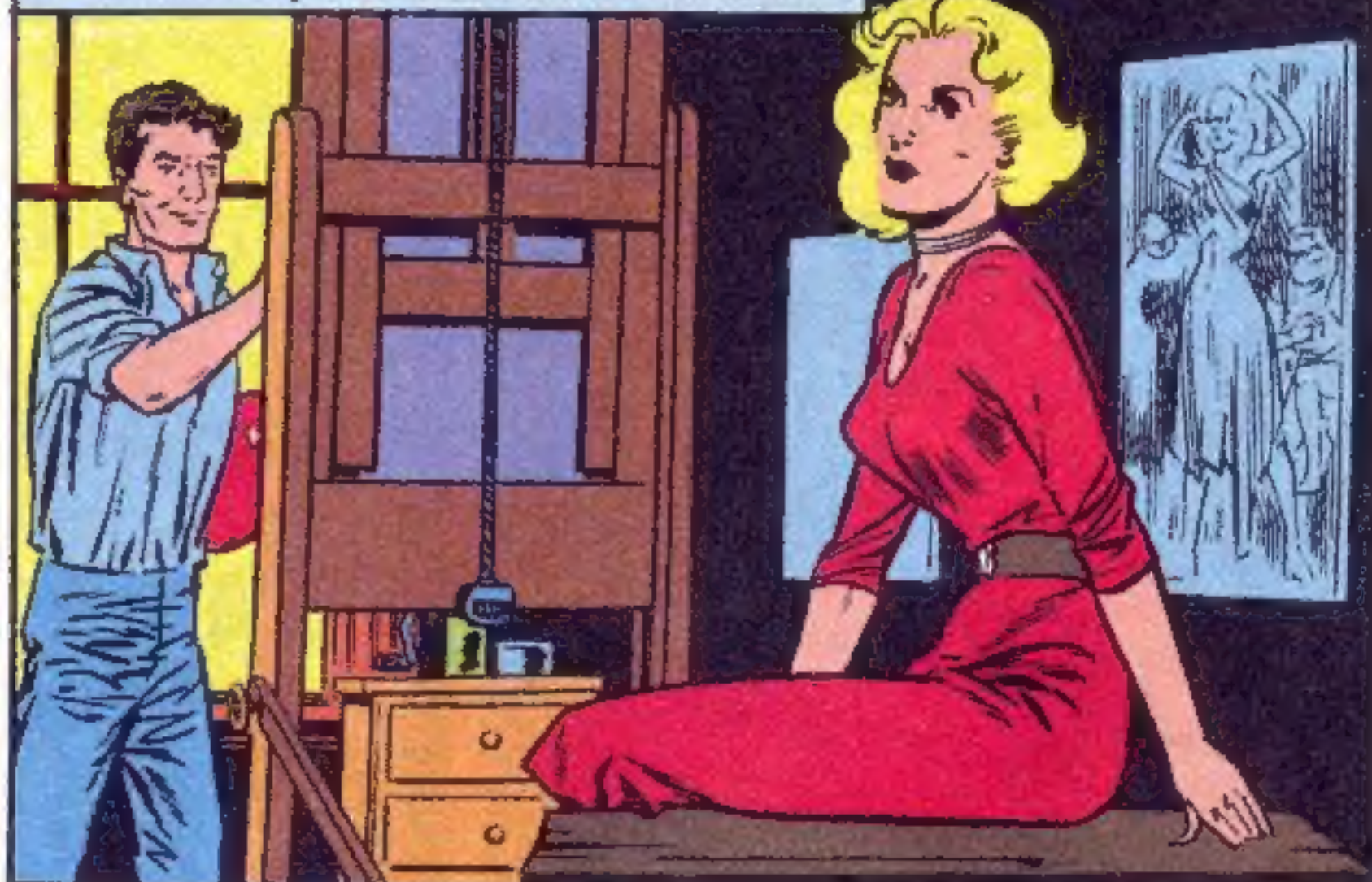
AT THE HEIGHT OF HIS STRUGGLE, WHEN HIS STRENGTH AND DETERMINATION WERE ALMOST AT THE BREAKING POINT AND HE WAS DISCOURAGED AND MISERABLE BEYOND WORDS, THERE WAS A KNOCK ON THE DOOR. HE OPENED IT, AND THERE SHE WAS, SMILING AND BEAUTIFUL, FILLING EVERY CORNER OF HIS BARREN ROOM WITH A WARM BRILLIANCE. IT STAGGERED HIM...



SHE HAD JUST MOVED IN UPSTAIRS AND NEEDED HIS AID TO COMPLETE SOME SMALL TASK. HE ACCEPTED GLADLY... AND WHILE HE HELPED HER, LISTENED TO HER TENDER VOICE, REVELED IN HER MELODIOUS LAUGH, HER RADIANT LOVELINESS. EYES UNBELIEVING, HE MARVELED AT THIS WONDROUS CREATURE WHO LESS-ENED HIS TENSIONS, DISPELLED HIS HATES, HIS FEARS... AND FOR THE FIRST TIME IN AGES, HE HEARD HIMSELF LAUGH...



THAT NIGHT HE SLEPT THE SLEEP OF THE INNOCENT, AND DREAMED THE DREAMS OF THE PEACEFUL. IN THE DAYS THAT FOLLOWED, HE REALIZED SHE LIKED HIS COMPANY AND WANTED TO BE WITH HIM. HE PAINTED HER OFTEN. HE PAINTED OTHER THINGS, ALSO... PLEASANT, SOOTHING PICTURES...

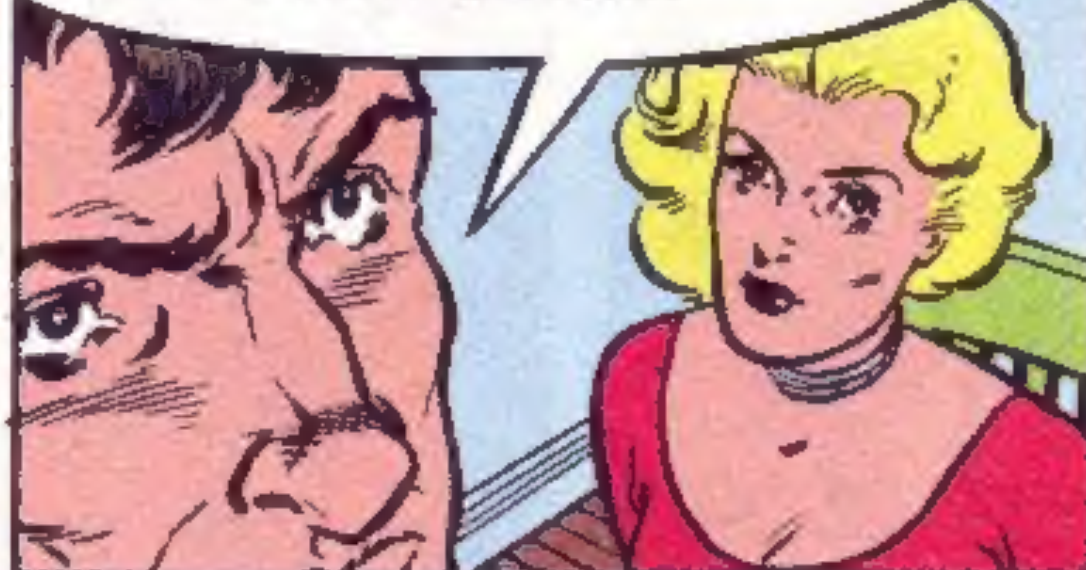


BUT THOUGH HE LAUGHED QUITE EASILY NOW, THERE DWELT WITHIN HIM THE GUILT AND SHAME OF HIS PAST. HE LONGED TO TELL HER OF THESE THINGS, TO CLEANSE HIMSELF AS SHE WAS CLEAN...

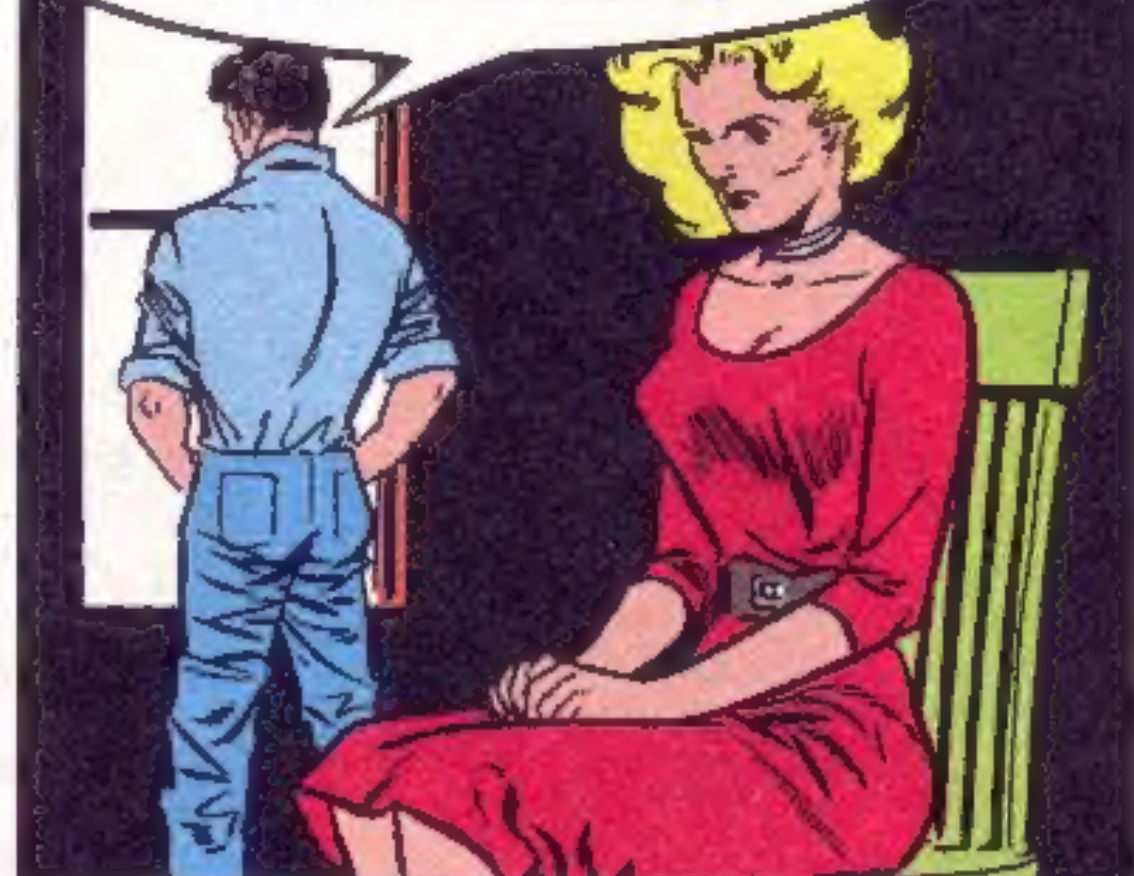


SO HE CONFESSED THE HORRIBLE EMOTIONS, THE VILE DEEDS THAT ONCE CONSUMED HIS SOUL, BLACK-ENED HIS HEART AND CAUSED HIM TO DESPISE THE GOODNESS IN LIFE. SHE LISTENED...

... I WAS SO CONFUSED. I STARTED OUT LOVING LIFE, BUT WITH EACH FAILURE I BECAME EMBITTERED. I FELT THE WORLD WAS DELIBERATELY TRYING TO FRUSTRATE AND WOUND ME, SO I FOUGHT BACK...



IT ISN'T EASY TO THINK CLEARLY WHEN YOU'RE SO ALL ALONE. WHEN YOU'RE DOWN AND OUT AND EVERYONE SEEMS AGAINST YOU, IT'S ONLY *NATURAL* TO FIGHT BACK... EVEN IF YOUR METHODS ARE PERVERTED! BUT YOUR MIND HAS BECOME SO MIXED UP THAT *ANY* WAY OUT SEEMS ALL RIGHT!



PERHAPS IT'S MERELY THAT BECAUSE A MAN HAS SO MANY EMOTIONS INSIDE HIM, ANYTHING THAT IGNITES THEM WILL CAUSE THEM TO EXPLODE. THE MORE EMOTIONS THERE ARE INSIDE AND THE LONGER THEY'VE BEEN CONFINED, THE GREATER THE EXPLOSION. AND IF THEY CAN'T FIND ESCAPE IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION... THEY'RE *BOUND TO BACKFIRE*...



JEALOUSY, FOR INSTANCE, AND *LOVE* ARE VERY CLOSE TO ONE ANOTHER. ONLY A FINE LINE SEPARATES THEM. JEALOUSY IS A FORM OF HATE... BUT, ACTUALLY, IT'S ONLY LOVE, INVERTED!

I GUESS THAT'S BEEN MY PROBLEM. I HAD SO MUCH LOVE WITHIN ME THAT WHEN THE WORLD SHUNNED ME AND REFUSED TO ACCEPT IT, I TURNED THE LOVE INSIDE OUT... AND IT BECAME HATE!



I REALIZE THESE THINGS NOW, BUT ONLY BECAUSE YOU CAME TO GIVE ME THE RELEASE I SO SORELY NEEDED. I'M LIKE A RUBBER-BAND THAT'S BEEN STRETCHED ALMOST TO THE BREAKING POINT, AND AT LAST FINDS THE RELEASE THAT ALLOWS IT TO SNAP BACK TO NORMAL !

I *NEED* YOU. NOT JUST LOVE YOU AND WANT YOU... I NEED YOU...*URGENTLY!* WITHOUT YOU, I KNOW I'LL JUST REVERT TO MY FORMER SELF AND BE LOST FOREVER. WITH YOU, I KNOW I'LL FIND THE STRENGTH I SO DESPERATELY NEED, AS I HAVE FOUND HAPPINESS... BY BEING WITH YOU.

I REALIZE THESE THINGS NOW, BUT ONLY BECAUSE YOU CAME TO GIVE ME THE RELEASE I SO SORELY NEEDED. I'M LIKE A RUBBER-BAND THAT'S BEEN STRETCHED ALMOST TO THE BREAKING POINT, AND AT LAST FINDS THE RELEASE THAT ALLOWS IT TO SNAP BACK TO NORMAL !

I *NEED* YOU. NOT JUST LOVE YOU AND WANT YOU... I NEED YOU...*URGENTLY!* WITHOUT YOU, I KNOW I'LL JUST REVERT TO MY FORMER SELF AND BE LOST FOREVER. WITH YOU, I KNOW I'LL FIND THE STRENGTH I SO DESPERATELY NEED, AS I HAVE FOUND HAPPINESS... BY BEING WITH YOU.

THERE WAS A SILENCE. THEN, TENDERLY, SHE CUPPED HIS FACE IN HER HANDS AND SAID THE WORDS THAT ALL HIS LIFE, IT SEEMED, HE HAD BEEN WAITING TO HEAR...




...I LOVE YOU...
I...I WANT TO BE
YOUR WIFE.

THERE WAS A SILENCE. THEN, TENDERLY, SHE CUPPED HIS FACE IN HER HANDS AND SAID THE WORDS THAT ALL HIS LIFE, IT SEEMED, HE HAD BEEN WAITING TO HEAR...



...I LOVE YOU...
I...I WANT TO BE
YOUR WIFE.

EARLY THE NEXT MORNING THE ARTIST WAITED FOR THE GIRL. TODAY THEY WERE GOING TO GET THEIR MARRIAGE LICENSE, BUT SEVERAL HOURS WENT BY AND SHE DIDN'T ARRIVE, AND WITH EACH PASSING MINUTE HE BECAME MORE DISCOURAGED ...



BY MID-AFTERNOON HE WAS AT HIS WIT'S-END. HE STORMED ABOUT HIS ROOM IN A FRENZY...

SHE'S *LEFT* ME! I TOLD HER THE TRUTH ABOUT MYSELF AND FRIGHTENED HER AWAY! OH GOD, WHAT AM I TO DO WITHOUT HER? WHAT AM I TO DO?

A man in a brown suit and red tie is depicted in a state of intense emotional distress. He is shown from the waist up, with his arms raised and his mouth wide open as if shouting or crying out. His expression is one of anguish and desperation. The background consists of swirling, abstract shapes in shades of red and white, creating a sense of chaos and turmoil. The overall style is reminiscent of mid-20th-century comic book art.

BY MID-AFTERNOON HE WAS AT HIS WIT'S-END. HE STORMED ABOUT HIS ROOM IN A FRENZY...

SHE'S *LEFT* ME! I TOLD HER THE TRUTH ABOUT MYSELF AND FRIGHTENED HER AWAY! OH GOD, WHAT AM I TO DO WITHOUT HER? WHAT AM I TO DO?

A man in a brown suit and red tie is depicted in a state of intense emotional distress. He is shown from the waist up, with his arms raised and his mouth wide open as if shouting or crying out. His expression is one of anguish and desperation. The background consists of swirling, abstract shapes in shades of red and white, creating a sense of chaos and turmoil. The overall style is reminiscent of mid-20th-century comic book art.

LATE EVENING. THE FRUSTRATED, TORTUOUS SOBBING, THE URGE STIRRING DEEP IN HIS BREAST, GROWING MUCH STRONGER, TO HURT SOMEONE. THE TELEGRAM FROM THE HOSPITAL...

SHE...SHE'S BEEN INJURED ...
CONDITION *CRITICAL!*...CALLING
FOR ME... *CALLING FOR ME?!*

A man with dark, curly hair, wearing a brown suit, white shirt, and red tie, is shown from the chest up. He has a shocked expression, with wide eyes and an open mouth. He is holding a white envelope or telegram with both hands. In the background, a doorway is visible. A man in a green military uniform and cap stands with his back to the viewer, looking out into a brightly lit area. The scene is set in a room with blue and yellow walls.

LATE EVENING. THE FRUSTRATED, TORTUOUS SOBBING, THE URGE STIRRING DEEP IN HIS BREAST, GROWING MUCH STRONGER, TO HURT SOMEONE. THE TELEGRAM FROM THE HOSPITAL...

SHE...SHE'S BEEN INJURED ...
CONDITION *CRITICAL!*...CALLING
FOR ME... *CALLING FOR ME?!*



A MAD RACE THROUGH THE STREETS, TEARS STREAKING HIS FACE, HER NAME TRAILING BEHIND HIM ON THE RAIN DROPS. AND THEN, WHITENESS. WHITENESS EVERYWHERE. WALLS, ROOMS, CLOTHING... AND THEN, THE DOCTOR...

THE DOCTOR...

THEY BROUGHT HER IN LAST NIGHT... HIT AND RUN VICTIM. SHE CAME OUT OF HER COMA LONG ENOUGH TO GIVE US YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS, BUT I'M AFRAID THERES VERY LITTLE HOPE. HER CONDITION IS *EXTREMELY SERIOUS.*



**HOW SERIOUS?!
HOW SERIOUS?!
CAN'T SOMETHING
BE DONE?!
ANYTHING?!**

**ONLY A DELICATE AND DANGER-
OUS BRAIN OPERATION CAN
SAVE HER. THERE'S BUT ONE
SURGEON SKILLFUL ENOUGH TO
DO IT, AND HE WANTS \$3,000
FOR THE JOB! OBVIOUSLY,
YOU CAN'T...**

**HOW SERIOUS?!
HOW SERIOUS?!
CAN'T SOMETHING
BE DONE?!
ANYTHING?!**

**ONLY A DELICATE AND DANGER-
OUS BRAIN OPERATION CAN
SAVE HER. THERE'S BUT ONE
SURGEON SKILLFUL ENOUGH TO
DO IT, AND HE WANTS \$3,000
FOR THE JOB! OBVIOUSLY,
YOU CAN'T...**

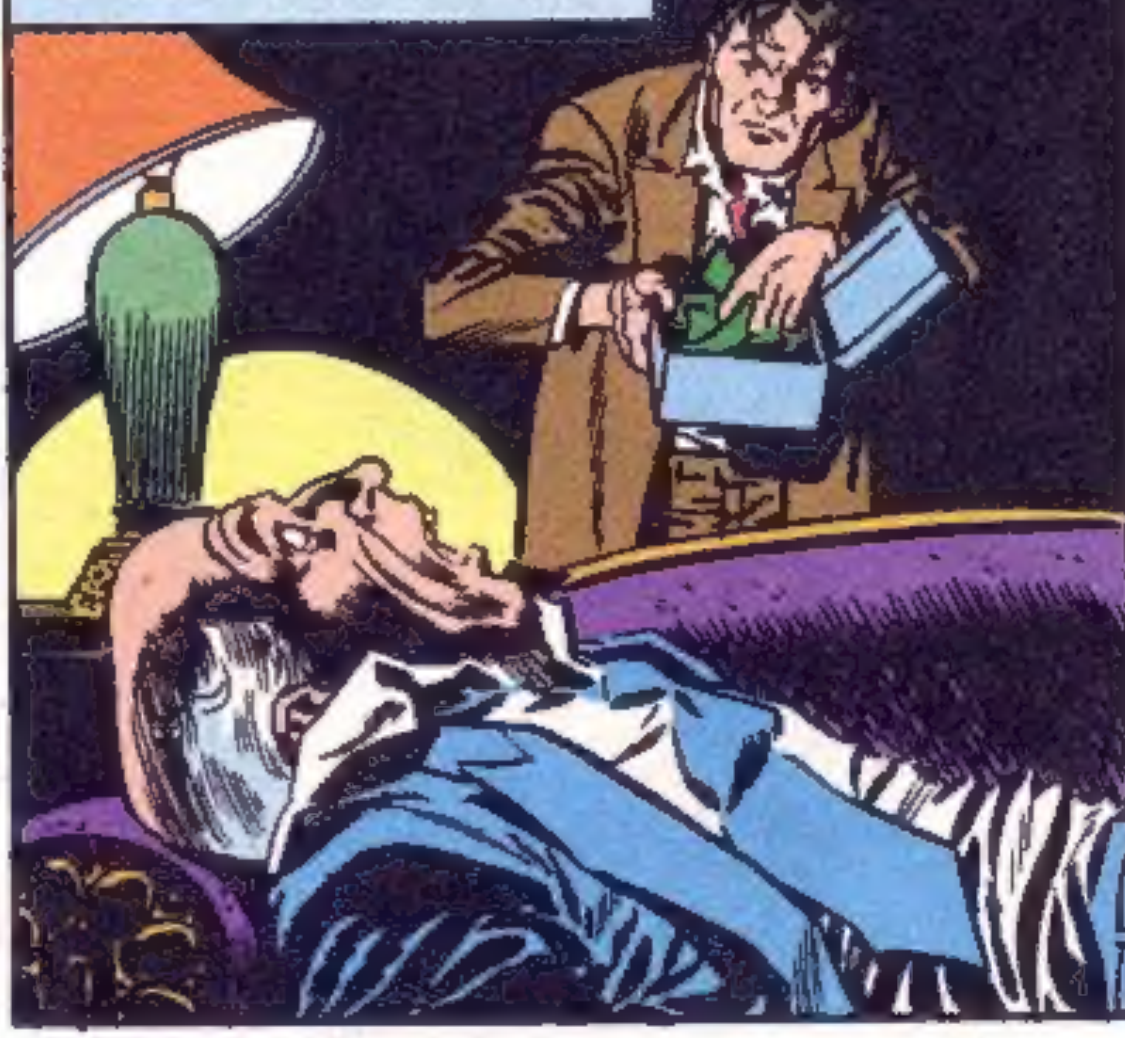
THREE THOUSAND DOLLARS?! MIGHT AS WELL BE A MILLION... BUT HE COULD GET IT! THERE WAS *ONE* WAY TO GET IT... A *PAINTING FOR THE OLD MAN*. THE ARTIST WENT INSTINCTIVELY TO THE BRIDGE...



THE LONG WAITING, AND THEN THE CLICKING OF HEELS, THE FIGURE DISEMBODYING ITSELF FROM THE MIST AND RAIN, FUSING INTO SOLIDITY. THE STRUGGLE, THE HACKING AND BLOODYING, *THE SNAPPING OF THE NECK!* THE THRILLING, GLOATING, DIZZYING REEL OF SATISFACTION...



HIS ROOM. THE HECTIC WIELDING OF BRUSHES ON CANVAS, LASTING TILL LATE THE NEXT AFTERNOON. THE OLD MAN'S REFUSAL TO PAY THE STEEP PRICE! THE QUARREL AND THE FIGHT... THE TAKING OF THE MONEY BY FORCE...



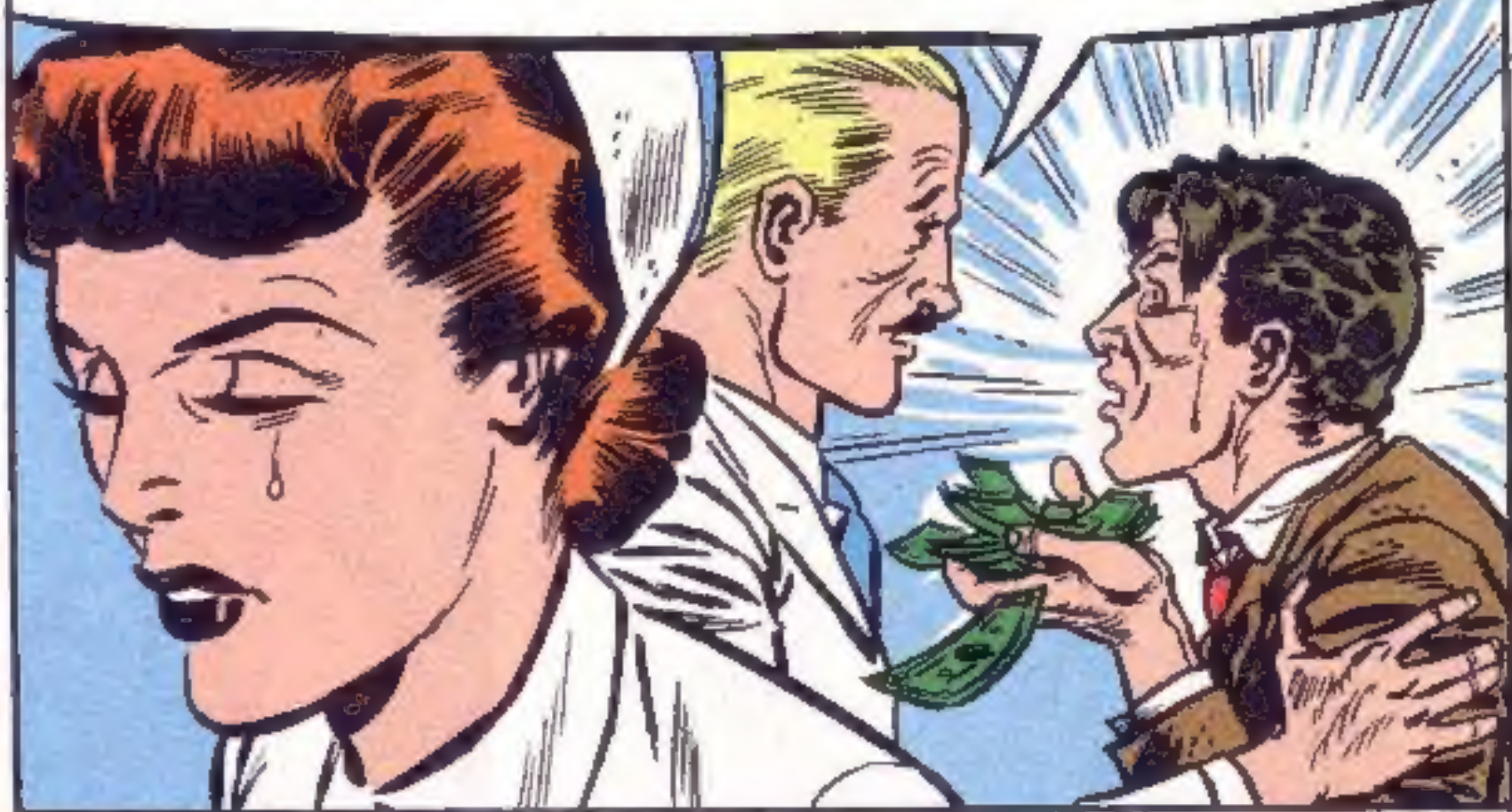
THE HEADLONG DASH BACK TO THE HOSPITAL THROUGH DARKENING STREETS, BUBBLING WITH THE HAPPY KNOWLEDGE THAT AT LAST HE HAD DEFEATED THE WORLD. THEIR FINAL ATTEMPT TO RUIN HIM HAD *FAILED*, FOR DIDN'T HE HAVE THE *MONEY*? JOYFULLY, HE RUSHED IN...

SEE? SEE, DOCTOR? (GASP!) ALL THE MONEY? YOU CAN SAVE HER NOW, (GASP!) CAN'T YOU? YOU CAN *SAVE HER FOR ME?*



THE PAINED LOOK IN THE DOCTOR'S EYES. THE NURSE LOWERING HER HEAD, TURNING HER BACK...

I'M... I'M AFRAID I HAVE BAD NEWS FOR YOU. YOU SEE, THE ONE MAN WHO COULD HAVE PERFORMED THE OPERATION... WAS *BRUTALLY MURDERED* LAST NIGHT WHILE CROSSING THE BRIDGE ON HIS WAY TO THE HOSPITAL! MUST HAVE BEEN THE WORK OF A *MANIAC*... *NECK BROKEN*... HACKED TO PIECES... *HORRIBLE!*



THE MISERABLE WRETCH SAT HUDDLED ON THE BENCH IN THE DARK CORRIDOR. LITTERING THE FLOOR AROUND HIS FEET WAS A GREEN CONFUSION, USELESS AND FORGOTTEN. HE SAT THERE, TEARS STREAMING DOWN HIS CHEEKS, TINY, PITIFUL SOBS RACKING HIS BODY. HE SAT THERE, STARING BLANKLY AT THE WALL, LISTENING TO THE CLOCK OVERHEAD RELENTLESSLY TICK AWAY THE SECONDS... AND THEN *SHE WOULD BE DEAD*...



HEH, HEH! CARE FOR A GAME OF *BRIDGE*, ANYONE? YOU BE THE *DUMMY!* BY DOING THOSE PAINTINGS, THE ARTIST GAVE HIS GIRL THE *BRUSH OFF!* OIL I KNOW IS, NOBODY BETTER GO WALKING ON THAT BRIDGE LATE AT NIGHT! HEH, HEH! WELL, I SEE THE *CRYPT-KEEPER* IS CHOMPING AT THE BIT, SO I'LL

LEAVE BEFORE HE STARTS CHOMPING ME! HE'S GOT A *PEACHY* STORY FOR YOU, SO UNTIL NEXT TIME *DROP DEAD!*



THE CRYPT OF TERROR

HEH, HEH. AND NOW IT'S YOUR *CRYPT-KEEPER'S* TURN TO CURDLE YOUR BLOOD. CRAWL INTO THE *CRYPT OF TERROR*, CRUMBS, PLOP DOWN ON THAT TREE STUMP THERE, HELP YOURSELF TO SOME FRUIT, AND WHILE YOU'RE MUNCHING, I'LL NARRATE THE NAUSEATING NOVELETTE I CALL...

A PEACH OF A PLOT!

IT'S *HER*, ALL RIGHT, LIEUTENANT. WHAT'S *LEFT* OF HER, THAT IS! AFTER *SEVEN YEARS*...IT *AIN'T* VERY MUCH!

SKULL'S SHATTERED. LOOKS LIKE HE *BLUGEONED* HER TO DEATH...

OKAY, BOYS. GET HER DOWN-TOWN FOR A *COMPLETE AUTOPSY*. CAREFUL OF THAT *TREE*, NOW. THAT GOES *TOO*!



JACK DAVIS



MICHAEL LANE TURNED AWAY, FIGHTING THE NAUSEA THAT SWEEPED OVER HIM. BESIDE HIM, LIEUTENANT PHIL DOLAN, HOMICIDE, STARED AT THE CORPSE LYING AMID THE TWISTING TANGLING ROOTS OF THE YOUNG PEACH TREE. HE STARED AT THE HOLES WHERE EYES ONCE SHINED, AT THE MOUTH THAT WAS ONCE SO KISSABLE, AT THE CRAWLING FLESH OF THE ONCE LOVELY NECK, AND AT THE TREE TRUNK ERUPTING FROM THE ROTTED CHEST...

I ALWAYS *KNEW* YOU MURDERED HER, LANE. I *ALWAYS* KNEW IT.

I WOULD HAVE GOTTEN *AWAY* WITH IT IF IT WEREN'T FOR ... FOR ...

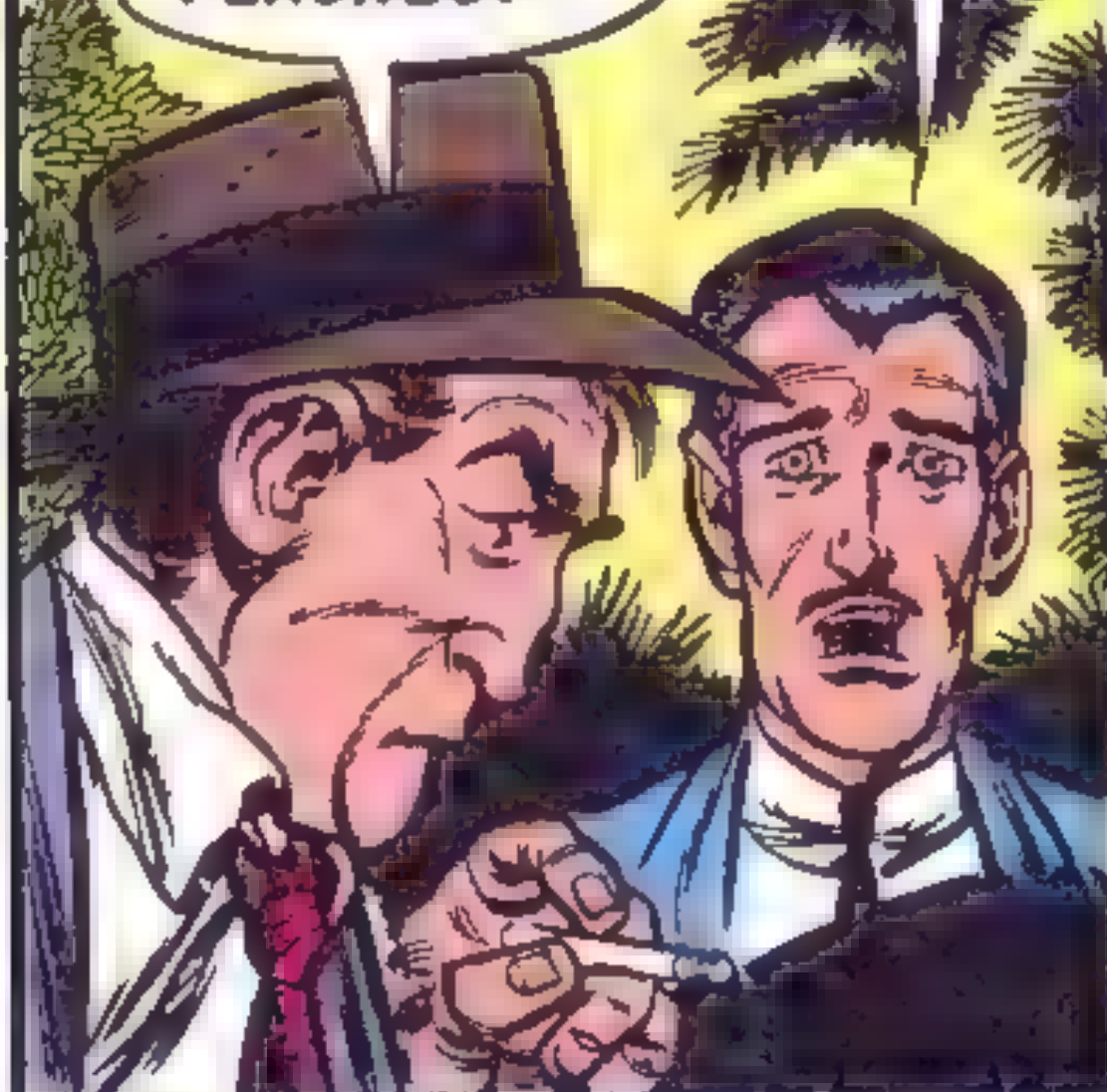


1

THE DETECTIVE INTERRUPTED HIM...

IF IT WEREN'T FOR PEACHES, EH, LANE? YOU WOULD HAVE GOTTEN AWAY WITH MURDER IF IT WEREN'T FOR PEACHES.

IT'S CRAZY. A THING LIKE THIS CAN'T HAPPEN...



AH, BUT IT *DID*, LANE. AND YOU'LL *BURN* BECAUSE IT *HAPPENED*. YOU *PLANNED* ON MURDERING SARAH, *DIDN'T* YOU? YOU *PLANNED IT* FROM THE *VERY BEGINNING!* CARE TO *TELL* ME THE WHOLE THING NOW?

I... I HAVE NOTHING TO SAY.



THEN *I'LL* TELL YOU, LANE. SEVEN YEARS IS A *LONG* TIME. *LONG* ENOUGH TO DO A LOT OF *SEARCHING* AND *ASKING*, LOOKING FOR *PIECES* TO A *PICTURE-PUZZLE*, AND LAYING EACH PIECE *IN...WHERE IT FITS*. *TONIGHT*, I FOUND THE *FINAL* PIECES TO THE PUZZLE. *TONIGHT*, THE PICTURE IS *COMPLETE*. SO, *I'LL* TELL YOU.



'YOU MET SARAH BRANDON AT A COCKTAIL PARTY IN 1945. SHE WAS *RICH* AND *LOVELY* AND YOU *WANTED* MONEY. YOU STARTED WORKING ON HER, UNTIL FINALLY...

OH, MIKE, DARLING. WE'LL BE SO HAPPY. WE'LL LIVE AT MY *COUNTRY* PLACE AND...

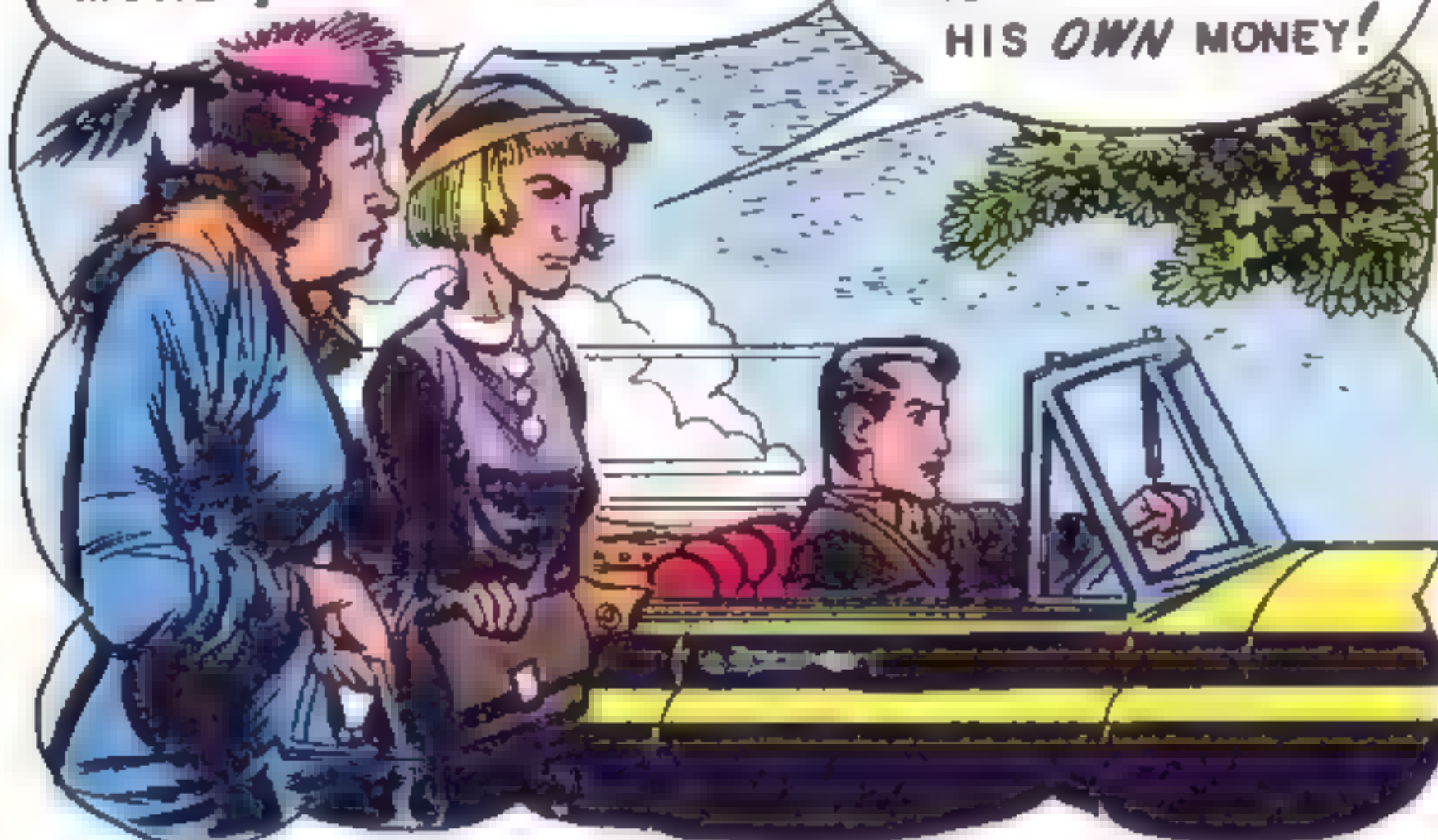
NOW *WAIT* A MINUTE, SARAH, DEAR. I INTEND TO *SUPPORT* YOU. AFTER *ALL*, I WANT TO MARRY YOU BECAUSE I *LOVE* YOU, NOT BECAUSE OF YOUR *MONEY*...



'AND THEN YOU WAITED. YOU WAITED UNTIL PEOPLE BEGAN TO TALK...'

THERE GOES THAT *MICHAEL LANE* IN HIS *WIFE'S FLASHY* CAR. MARRIED HER FOR HER *MONEY*, THAT'S WHAT HE DID!

YOU'D THINK A MAN WOULD HAVE A LITTLE *PRIDE* AND TRY TO EARN HIS *OWN* MONEY!



'SHE BELIEVED YOU, DIDN'T SHE, LANE? SHE REALLY BELIEVED THAT YOU LOVED HER AND NOT HER MONEY. SO YOU WERE MARRIED. BUT AFTER THE HONEYMOON, YOU *DID* COME OUT HERE TO LIVE...TO SARAH'S COUNTRY HOME...'

ONLY TILL I GET *LOCATED*, HONEY! I'M A LITTLE *FLAT*, NOW.

I UNDERSTAND, MIKE.



'BUT NOT *YOU*, LANE! YOU HAD *PLANS*. *BIG* PLANS. AND YOU *WANTED* PEOPLE TO TALK LIKE THAT. YOU DIDN'T EVEN *TRY* TO GET A JOB...TO EARN YOUR OWN KEEP. BUT SARAH DIDN'T *CARE*. SHE *LOVED* YOU TOO MUCH. SHE DIDN'T *MIND* YOUR LIVING OFF HER INCOME...'

... AND YOU DON'T MIND WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING?

OF *COURSE* I DON'T MIND, DARLING. I DON'T MIND IF YOU *NEVER* GO TO WORK. I *LIKE* YOU BEING NEAR ME ALL DAY LONG...



'IT WAS *FRUSTRATING*, WASN'T IT LANE? YOU *WANTED* SARAH TO MIND. IT WAS PART OF THE *SCHEME*. YOU EVEN BEGAN TAKING *ADVANTAGE*...TRYING TO *ANTAGONIZE* HER...'

BUT, MIKE. YOU CAN USE *MY* CAR WHENEVER YOU *WANT* TO. WHY DO WE NEED *TWO*...

I WANT MY *OWN*, SARAH! I DON'T WANT TO HAVE TO *ASK* YOU ALL THE TIME...

'AND FINALLY SHE BROKE DOWN. FINALLY...SHE BLEW UP. AND THOUGH YOU TRIED TO ACT HURT, SECRETLY YOU WERE GLAD...'

A *NEW CAR!* YOUR *OWN APARTMENT* IN *TOWN!* MORE *CLOTHES* THAN YOU COULD *POSSIBLY* NEED! IS IT *TRUE*, MIKE? IS IT *TRUE* WHAT THEY'RE ALL *SAYING?*

SARAH!

'...SO YOU PRESSED THE ARGUMENT...'

IT *IS* TRUE, *ISN'T* IT? THAT'S ALL YOU MARRIED ME FOR! MY *MONEY!*

SO WHAT! IT'S A *FAIR TRADE*. WE EACH HAVE WHAT WE *WANTED*.

'...CREATED QUITE A SCENE...'

YOU...*NEVER* WANTED...*ME!* YOU *NEVER* LOVED ME!

THE *DOUGH*, BABY! I LOVED THE *DOUGH!*

'...AND THE SERVANTS HEARD IT ALL. JUST WHAT YOU WANTED...'

THEN...THEN IT'S NO USE GOING ON...SOB... LIKE...THIS!

THERE'S THE DOOR!

'YOU'D TIMED IT PERFECTLY, EH, LANE? THE SERVANTS HAD GONE FOR THE DAY BY THE TIME SARAH HAD FINISHED PACKING...'

I'M... *LEAVING*, MIKE. I'M GOING TO GET A *DIVORCE*.

YOU'RE A LITTLE *FOOL*, SARAH. HOW COULD YOU *BELIEVE* THAT OF ME?

'IT WAS WHAT SHE *WANTED* TO HEAR, *WASN'T* IT, LANE? SUDDENLY SHE WAS IN YOUR ARMS AND YOU WERE HOLDING HER QUIVERING BODY AND HATING HER AND SAYING THE THINGS YOU HAD TO SAY...'

OH, MIKE. *MIKE*. TELL ME IT *ISN'T* TRUE.

OF *COURSE* IT *ISN'T* TRUE, DARLING. I MARRIED YOU BECAUSE I *LOVED* YOU. YOU'LL *SEE*. I'LL *MAKE* IT UP. TOMORROW, I'LL LOOK FOR A *JOB*. *REALLY*...

'THAT LAST NIGHT WAS FUN, WASN'T IT LANE? MAKING LOVE TO HER, AND WAITING... WAITING TO CATCH HER OFF GUARD...'

I'M SO ASHAMED, MIKE! I'M SORRY ABOUT THOSE THINGS I SAID.

I'M THE ONE THAT'S SORRY, HONEY!

'AND THEN YOU FOUND YOUR OPPORTUNITY! REMEMBER, LANE? SHE WAS SITTING IN THE LIVING ROOM MUNCHING ON SOME FRUIT. THE BLINDS WERE DRAWN. IT WAS LATE AT NIGHT...'

HUNGRY, SARAH?

A LITTLE...

'REMEMBER THE PEACH, LANE? SHE HAD A MOUTHFUL WHEN YOU STRUCK HER WITH THE POKER...'

GGGGHHHH...

'REMEMBER THE GURGLING SOUND THAT SHE MADE AND THE PEACH JUICE DRIBBLING OUT OF HER MOUTH AND HER EYES BULGING AND HER FACE TURNING BLUE AS YOU BEAT HER TO DEATH? REMEMBER, LANE...?'

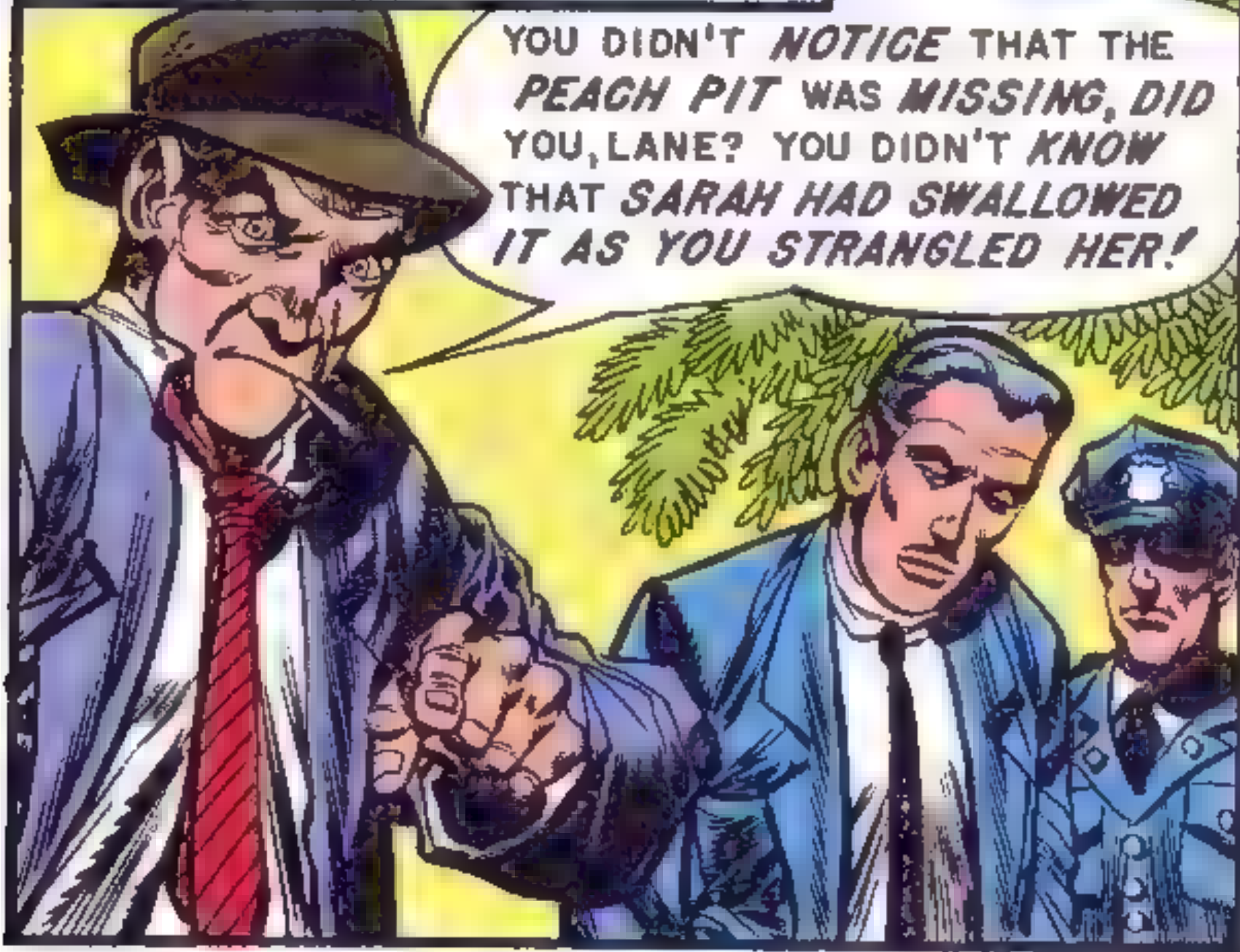
'REMEMBER HOW YOU CARRIED HER LIMP BODY OUT OF THE HOUSE AND BURIED IT OUT IN THE BACK GARDEN...?'

'THEN, YOU BURNED HER SUITCASE... THE ONE SHE'D PACKED... IN THE FIREPLACE...'

'...AND CLEANED UP. REMEMBER HOW YOU SCOOPED UP THE HALF-CHEWED MOUTHFUL OF PEACH FROM THE RUG WHERE IT HAD FALLEN FROM HER LIPS AND THREW IT AWAY TOGETHER WITH THE UNEATEN HALF OF THE PEACH...?'

LIEUTENANT DOLAN POINTED TO THE ROTTED CORPSE WITH THE TREE ROOTS TWINING AROUND IT AND THE TRUNK GROWING FROM ITS CHEST...

YOU DIDN'T *NOTICE* THAT THE *PEACH PIT* WAS *MISSING*, DID YOU, LANE? YOU DIDN'T *KNOW* THAT *SARAH* HAD *SWALLOWED* IT AS YOU *STRANGLED* HER!



'YOU CALLED US THE NEXT DAY. YOU REPORTED THAT YOUR WIFE WAS MISSING, AND I CAME OVER...'

SOME OF HER *CLOTHES* ARE GONE, LIEUTENANT DOLAN. DO YOU THINK SHE'S *LEFT* ME?

DID YOU AND YOUR WIFE GET *ALONG*, MR. LANE? ANY *ARGUMENTS*?



WELL, YES. WE *DID* HAVE AN ARGUMENT LAST *NIGHT*. SHE ACCUSED ME OF MARRYING HER FOR HER *MONEY*!

I SEE. WELL, WE'LL TRY TO TRACE HER, MR. LANE. DON'T WORRY! I'M SURE SHE'S ALL RIGHT.

'THAT WAS WHEN I GOT SUSPICIOUS, LANE! WHEN A WIFE WALKS OUT ON HER HUSBAND, SHE'S USUALLY EASY TO TRACE. A TRAIN RESERVATION. A PLANE TICKET. SOMETHING...'

YOUR WIFE JUST SEEMS TO HAVE *DISAPPEARED*, MR. LANE.

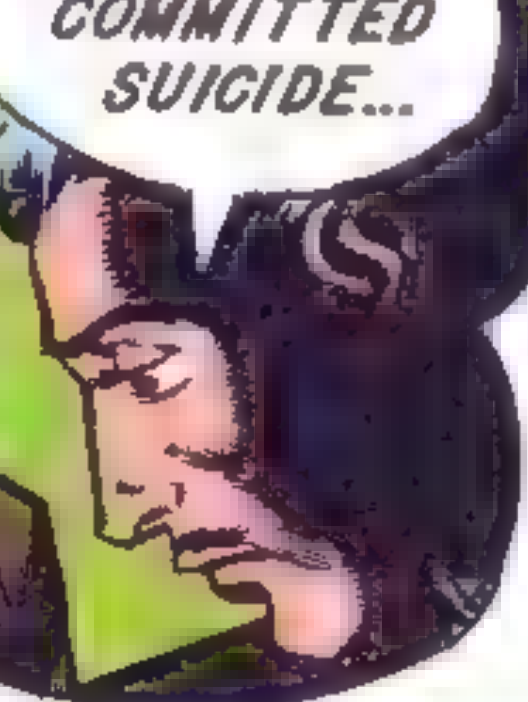
SOMETHING'S *HAPPENED* TO HER. I *KNOW* IT. OH, LORD... IF SHE *COMMITTED SUICIDE*...

'PEOPLE WHO PLAN ON SUICIDE DON'T PACK BAGS, LANE! I STARTED ASKING QUESTIONS. THE SERVANTS...'

YES. THEY ARGUED THAT NIGHT! SHE THREATENED TO LEAVE!

HE ADMITTED HE DIDN'T LOVE HER. THAT IT WAS HER *MONEY*...

I SEE! WELL... THANKS...



'REMEMBER HOW I CAME TO YOU...'

I THINK YOU *MURDERED* HER, LANE! IF IT'S THE *LAST* THING I DO, I'LL *PROVE* IT.

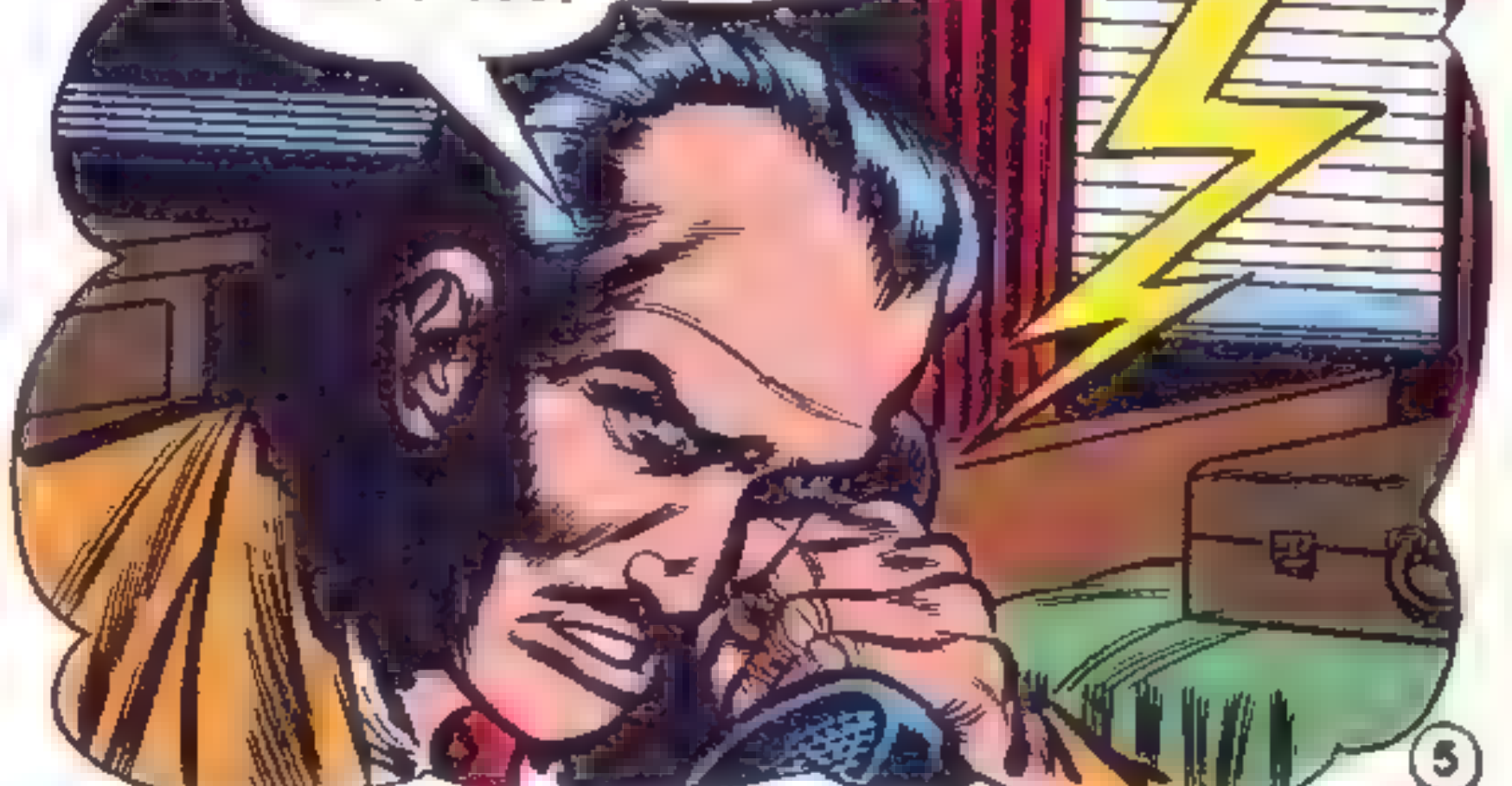
YOU'RE *CRAZY*, DOLAN! I'D LIKE TO SEE YOU *TRY*.



'YOU GOT A LITTLE WORRIED, DIDN'T YOU, LANE? YOU DECIDED TO TAKE A LITTLE TRIP. WERE THINGS GETTING TOO HOT FOR YOU...?'

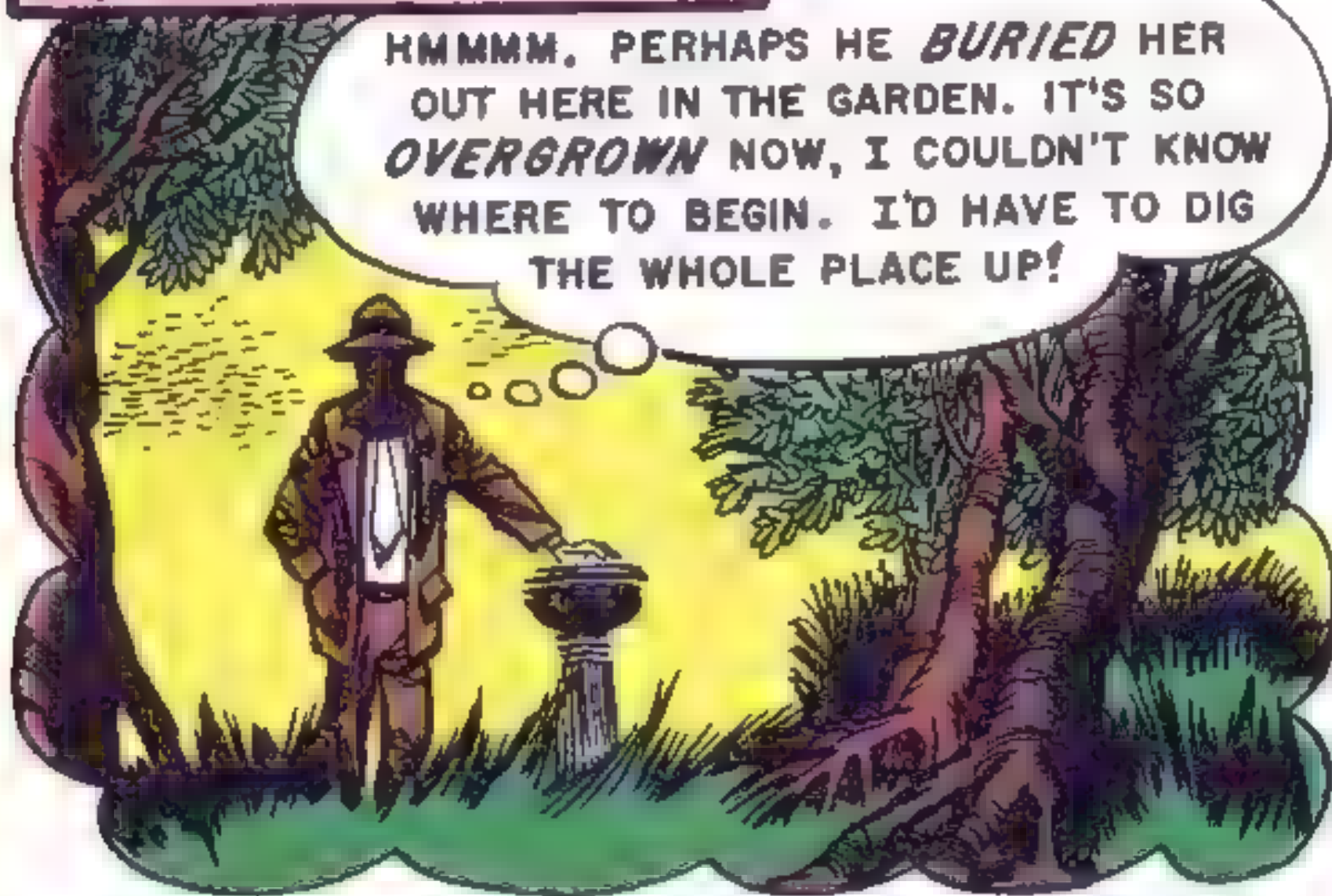
I JUST THOUGHT I'D LET YOU *KNOW*. I HAVE TO GO TO *EUROPE*... ON *BUSINESS*. IF YOU *FIND* MY WIFE, GET IN TOUCH WITH ME, WON'T YOU?

SURE, MR. LANE! *SURE!*



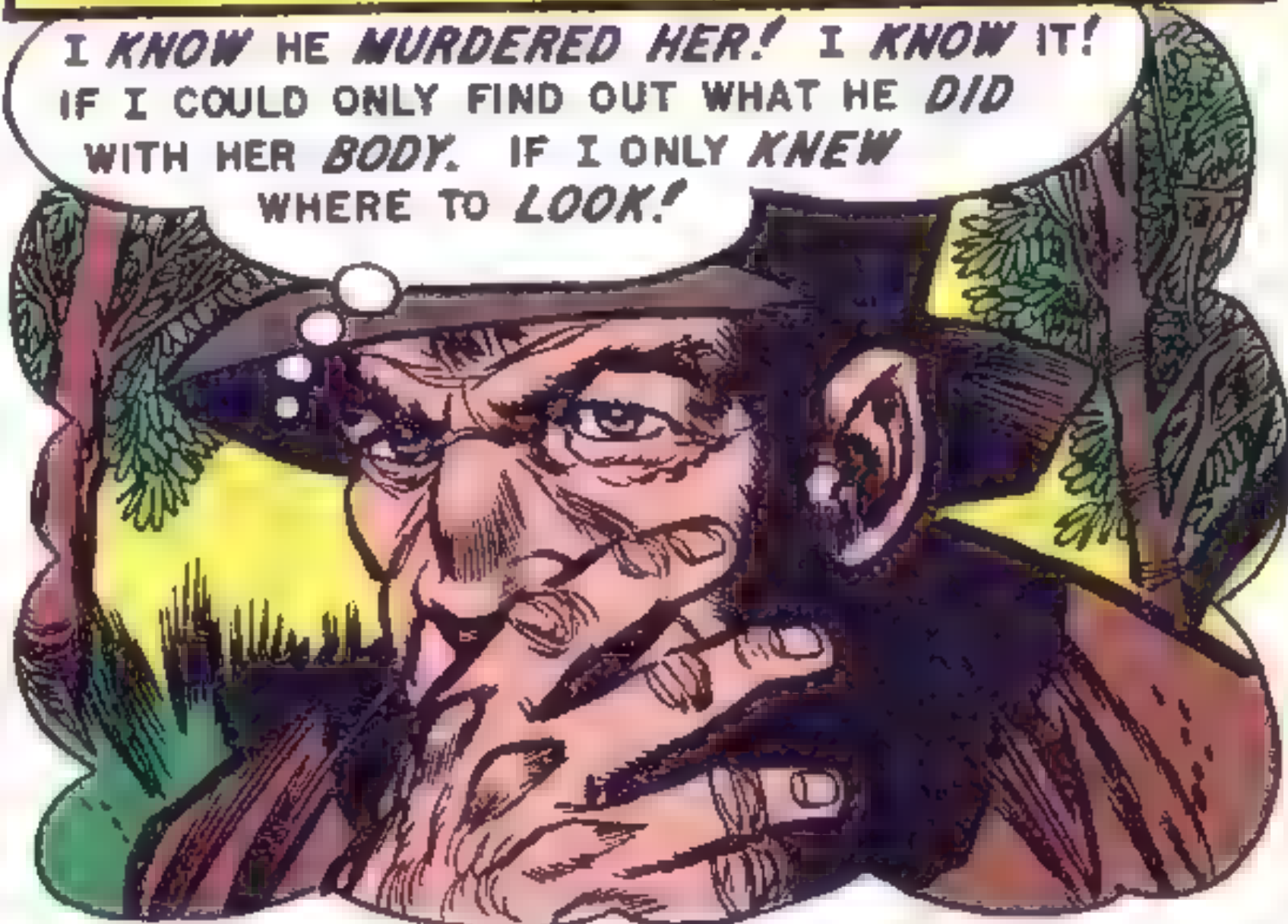
'YOU STAYED AWAY, DIDN'T YOU, LANE? YOU STAYED AWAY FOR SEVEN YEARS. YOU FIGURED YOU'D COME BACK AND YOUR WIFE WOULD BE LEGALLY DEAD AND HER FORTUNE WOULD BE YOURS. BUT I DIDN'T GIVE UP, LANE. I KEPT PLUGGING...'

HMMMM. PERHAPS HE *BURIED* HER OUT HERE IN THE GARDEN. IT'S SO *OVERGROWN* NOW, I COULDN'T KNOW WHERE TO BEGIN. I'D HAVE TO DIG THE WHOLE PLACE UP!



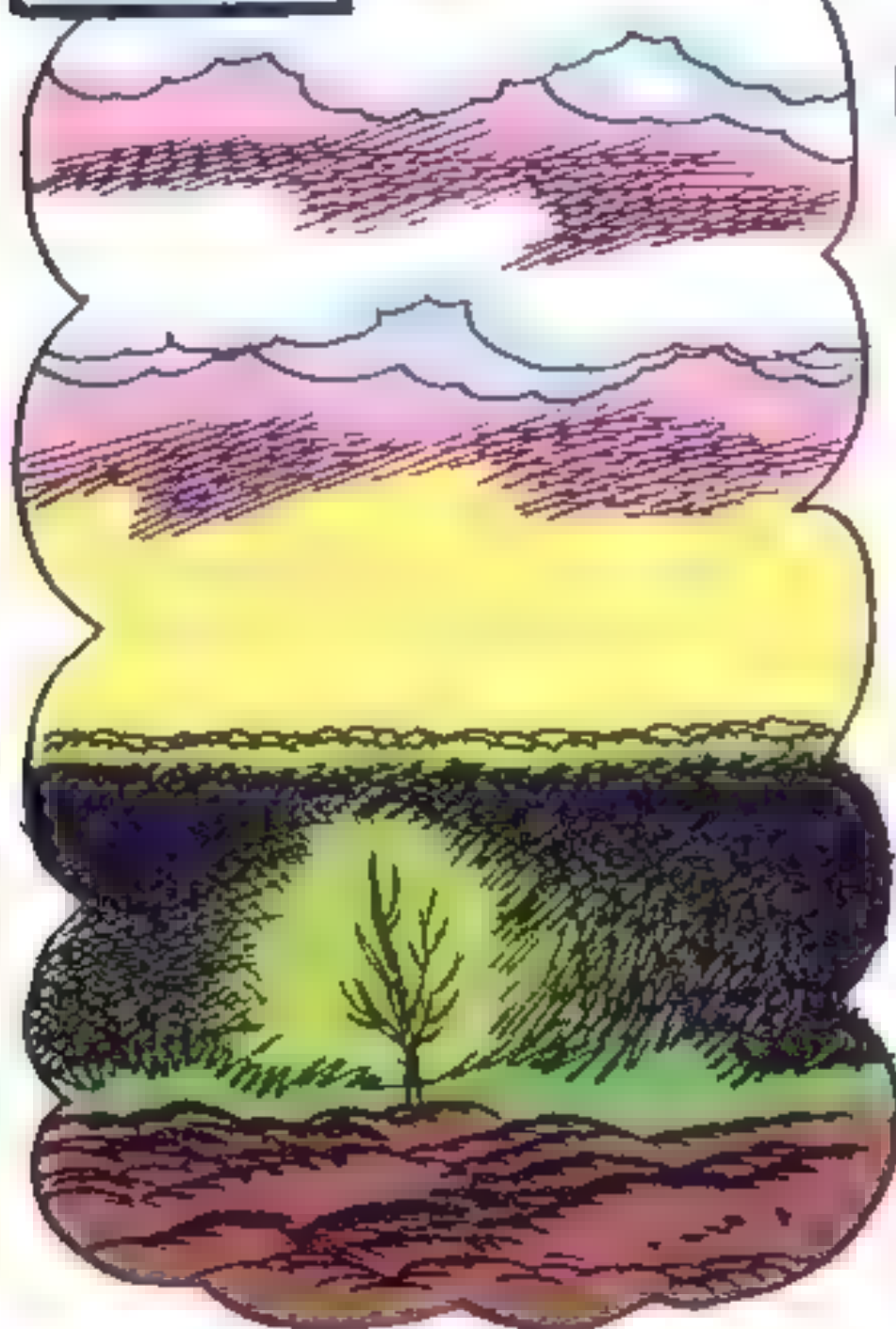
'YOU LET YOUR COUNTRY PLACE GO TO RUIN! YOU DIDN'T *WANT* ANYBODY TENDING THE GARDEN, DIGGING AROUND. SO NO ONE NOTICED THE GREEN SHOOT POP THROUGH THE GROUND OVER SARAH'S GRAVE...'

I *KNOW* HE *MURDERED* HER! I *KNOW* IT! IF I COULD ONLY FIND OUT WHAT HE *DID* WITH HER *BODY*. IF I ONLY *KNEW* WHERE TO *LOOK*!



'THE YEARS PASSED AND THE GREEN SHOOT BECAME A STALK...'

'...THEN A YOUNG TREE...'



'...GROWING STRONGER WITH EACH PASSING SUMMER...'

'...UNTIL, LAST WEEK... IT BORE FRUIT... *A PEACH*...'



I'D HEARD YOU WERE COMING HOME TO CLAIM SARAH'S FORTUNE. TODAY, WHEN YOU ARRIVED, I WAS WAITING...'

WELL! LIEUTENANT DOLAN. WELCOMING ME *HOME* I SEE! NEVER *FOUND* MY *WIFE*, EH? TOO BAD!

NO, LANE. YOU WERE *TOO CLEVER*. I *STILL* SAY YOU *MURDERED* HER, BUT I CAN'T *PROVE* IT.



'YOU WERE TRIUMPHANT, WEREN'T YOU, LANE? YOU INVITED ME IN. YOU GLOATED. AND THEN, YOU SPOTTED THE TREE...'

... YOU KNOW, DOLAN! *SEVEN YEARS*? HER FORTUNE IS *MINE*... NOW... I... I...

WHAT *IS* IT, LANE? WHAT DO YOU SEE?



'YOU TRIED TO COVER UP YOUR SHOCK AT SEEING THE PEACH TREE GROWING OUT OF SARAH'S GRAVE. YOU MADE A FEEBLE EXPLANATION...'

IT'S...IT'S JUST...THAT THE GARDEN IS SO NEGLECTED.

YES. IT *IS* A SHAME. IS THAT A YOUNG PEACH TREE, LANE?



'YOU WERE PRETTY GOOD AT COMPOSING YOURSELF, LANE. I LIKED THE WAY YOU STRODE OVER TO THE TREE...SMILING!'

WELL! SO IT *IS*! I'D ALMOST FORGOTTEN I'D *PLANTED* IT! LOOK! IT'S *BORNE* FRUIT.

I DIDN'T KNOW YOU LIKED PEACHES, LANE! I KNOW YOUR *WIFE* DID!

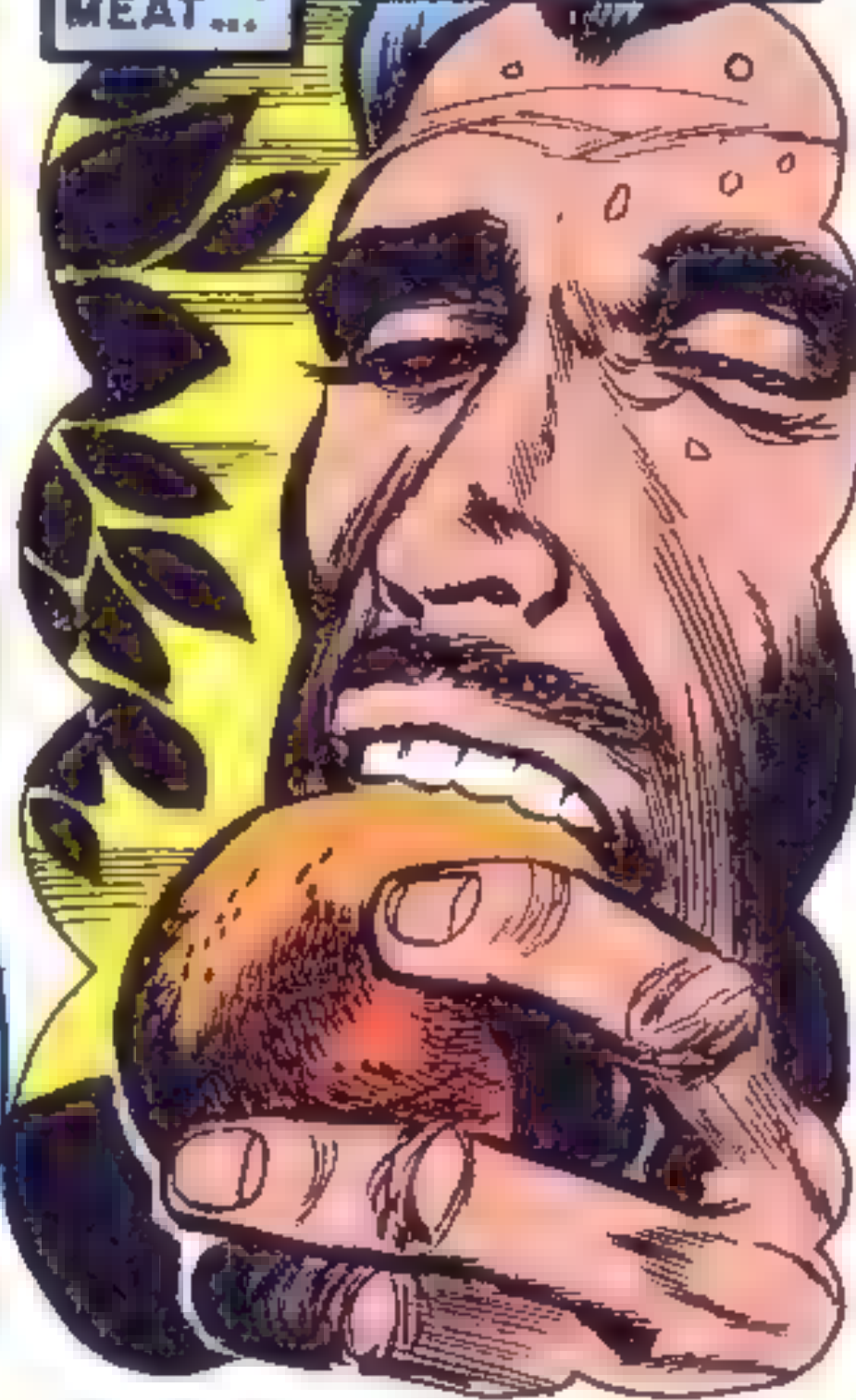


'...HOW HAPPILY YOU PLUCKED THE PEACH FROM ITS LIMB...'

ME? I LOVE PEACHES!



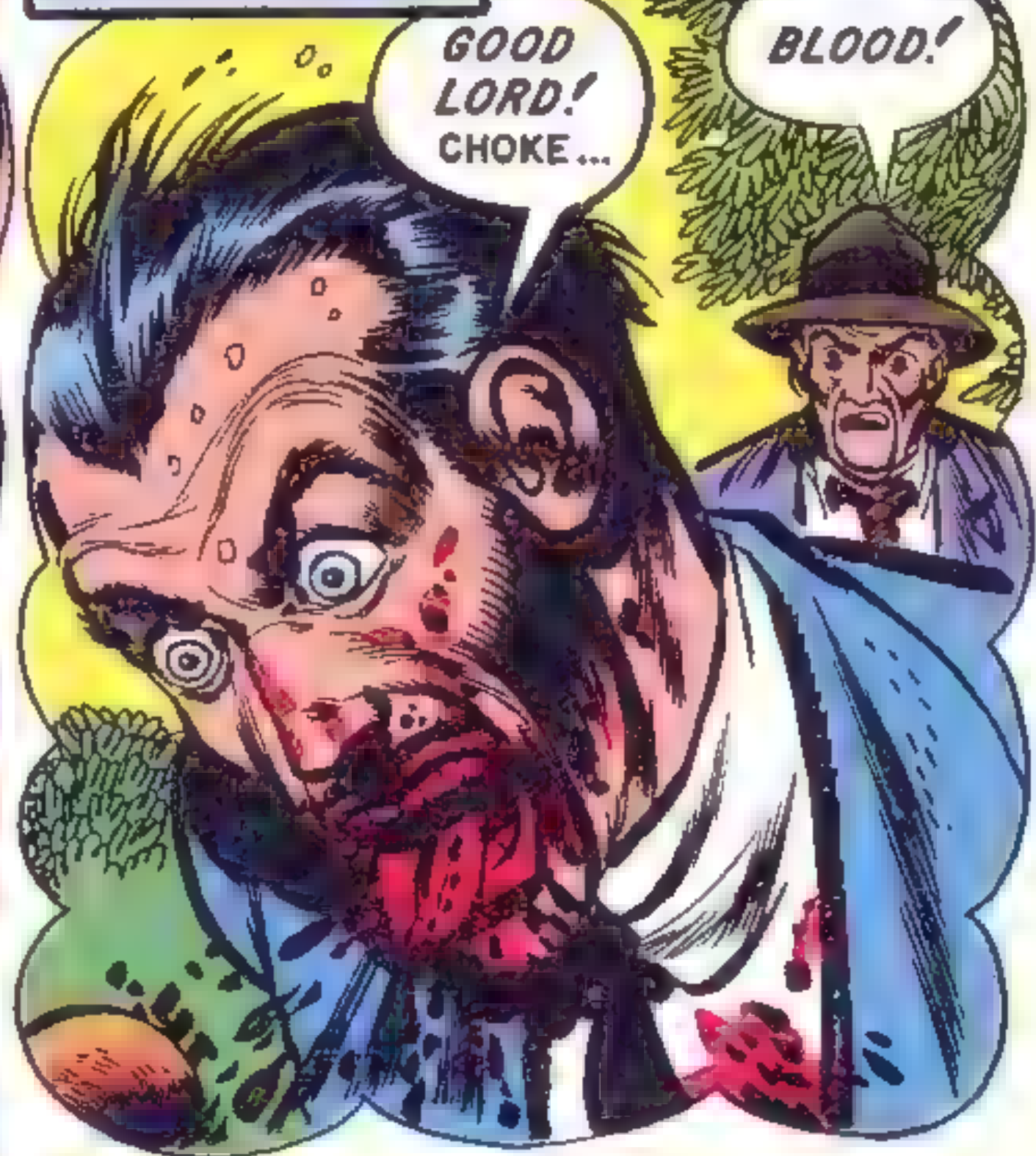
'...AND SANK YOUR TEETH INTO ITS PULPY SUCCULENT MEAT...'



'...AND HOW THE SICKLY RED LIQUID SPLATTERED OUT, OVER YOUR FACE, INTO YOUR MOUTH, GAGGING YOU WITH ITS SALTY RICHNESS, COVERING YOUR SHIRT WITH A CRIMSON SMEAR...'

GOOD LORD! CHOKE...

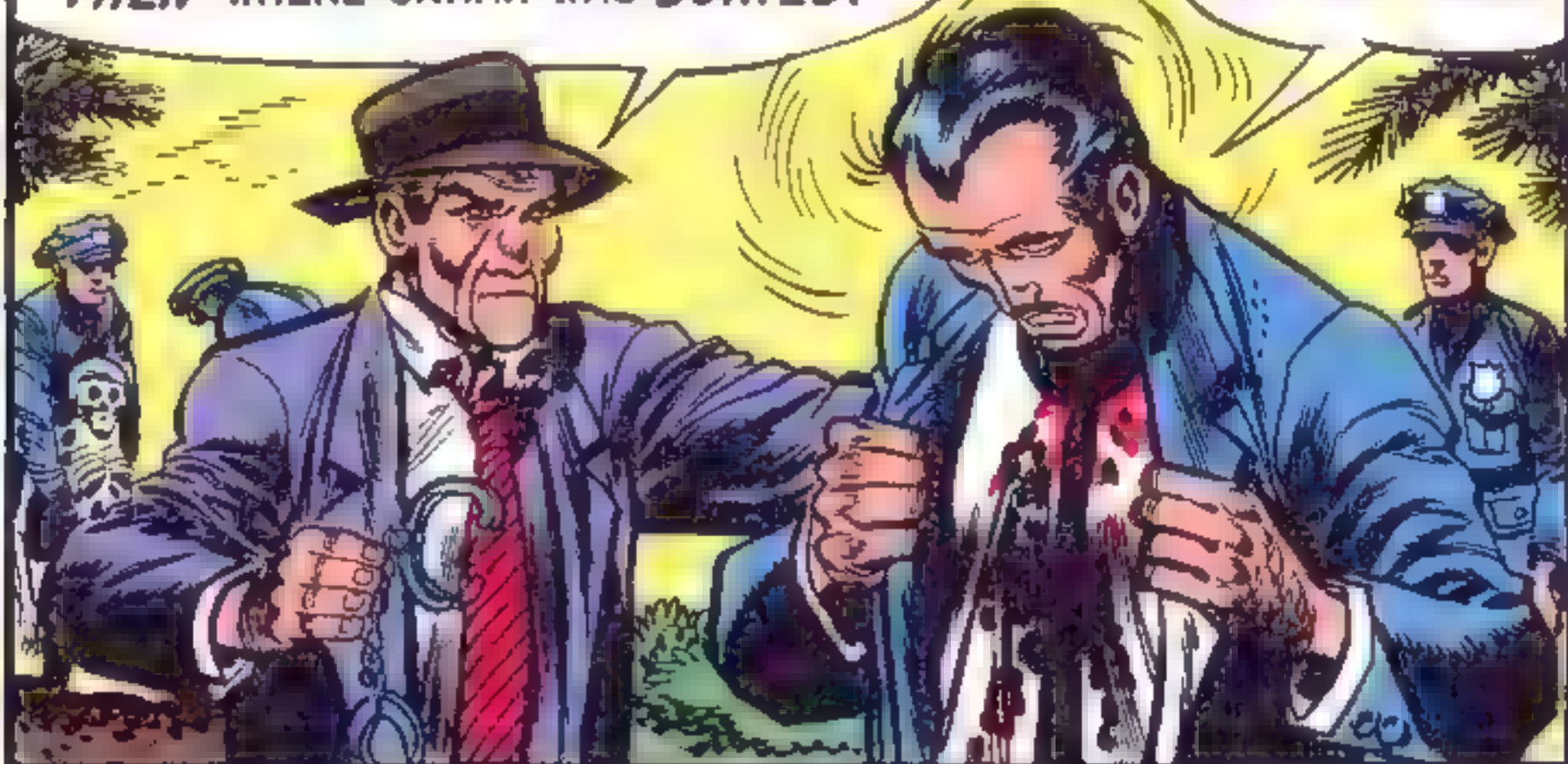
BLOOD!



THEY WERE LIFTING THE FOUL-SMELLING, DECAYED CORPSE AND CARRYING IT OFF. MICHAEL RETCHED, LOOKING DOWN AT HIS BLOOD-SOAKED SHIRT. LIEUTENANT DOLAN SMILED ...

YES, LANE! IT *WAS* BLOOD. *HUMAN* BLOOD! SO I KNEW WHERE TO *LOOK*! I *KNEW* THEN WHERE SARAH WAS *BURIED*!

THINGS LIKE THIS DON'T HAPPEN...CHOKE...



HEH, HEH. NOW WASN'T THAT A *JUICY PEACH* OF A YARN, KIDDIES? OF COURSE IT WAS A *BLOODY SHAME* THAT MIKE PIT OFF MORE THAN HE COULD *CHEW*.

BY THE WAY! I'VE TAKEN SOME *CUTTINGS* FROM THE *TREE* GROWING FROM SARAH'S *CHEST*. I'M GOING INTO THE *NURSERY BUSINESS*, LANDSCAPING *VAMPIRE GARDENS*! NOW, I'LL TURN YOU BACK TO THE *VAULT-KEEPER*! 'BYE!





THE VAULT-KEEPER'S CORNER

President and CEO—Stephen A. Geppi

Publisher—Russ Cochran

Dear Vault-Keeper,

I do hope that when you come to reprint VAULT OF HORROR #32 (your #21) in a few month's time, you will use the uncensored cover, and not the [censored] version!

In case you still haven't received an answer I believe that the old movie about which you inquired in issue #18 may be the 1942 Universal film NIGHT MONSTER, starring Ralph Morgan as a legless man who fashions temporary "artificial" limbs through the use of his psychic powers.

Alyssen Bills

Vancouver, WA

Heh, heh! You'll have to wait just 3 months to see the UNcensored version. Meantime, you've little doubt hit the nail on the head with NIGHT MONSTER. Thanks! The anonymous editor has decided to shoot for the moon and ask the readers. . .

[What's the title of the movie in which a brash young newspaperman or policeman decides to impress the daughter of the mad scientist with his knowledge of radios by sitting in the scientist's homemade electric chair (or monster-making machine, or something) and trying to tune in a station? Only a surprise interruption saves him. Thanks in advance. -ED]

-VK

I am your biggest fan. Are you and The Crypt-Keeper friends (same for The Old Witch, too)? I didn't know you had comics until I read VAULT, now I'm your biggest fan.

Matt Williams, age 9

In VAULT #19 (#30) I can in the story "Practical Choke!" recognize a youthful Bill Gaines posing as one of the medical students. I can gather that one of the others must be Al Feldstein, but who is the third? Does one of your obnoxious editors know, or does one of the readers?

Claus Simonsen

Samsøe, DENMARK

My thinking is that you've pegged Gaines, but the tall one was surely Johnny Craig and the light haired one was maybe artist George Evans. Any votes to the contrary?

-VK

I can begin this letter only with the most outstanding THANK YOU! Having been an EC FanAddict for over 40 years, nothing could please me more than having these magnificent magazines back.

I first became acquainted with [them] back at the middle fifties, when, paradoxically, they were coming to a regretful end. VALOR and PIRACY were being published in their Spanish editions, and I'll never forget how I got hooked by those masterful illustrated tales of adventure in old ages and the sea. Some years later, in 1963, I wrote to a Mexican publisher about the horror magazines of his back in the '50s (translations of the MARVEL horror stuff, and others), and the man was kind enough to send me a

whole package of EC comics translated into Spanish. I can tell you how outraged I became when I learned, some time afterwards, all about the Code, and the rest of infamous deeds which sent the Golden Age, and EC at its midst, directly to hell.

The problem is I'm getting the magazines through somebody who charges me almost thrice the price (\$30 for each volume). Not being exactly a RICHIE RICH fellow, I'd like to find out if you could think of some way to get the volumes at a lower cost.

Carlos M. Federici

Montevideo, URUGUAY

Review our ads for back issues, our low cover price and reasonable shipping charges may save you money! -VK

I must say I enjoyed Craig's cover for VAULT 19. The juxtaposition of the severed arm hanging from the strap with an everyday scene of tired commuters only heightens the horror. Especially clever was the placement of the "Bi-Mo" ad, offering relief for upset stomachs, displayed prominently behind the row of nauseated passengers.

"Split Personality!" is as fine a piece of 'hack-work' as I've ever seen!

It seemed blatantly obvious by page 2 an octopus was the culprit of "Who Doughnut?" But, it was great the way small clues were dropped throughout: "guys like you are all arms!" the circles on the captain's tie, giving the appearance of a tentacle, etc. I can't remember another story with so many innocent victims—the killer being an animal (I hesitate to say "dumb animal," how many octopi do you know of who've mastered the art of disguise?!) seemingly doesn't violate EC's moral code of always punishing the guilty

Barry McCollum

Alton, IL

I am writing to say how great the EC reprints are. My favorite story is "Strictly from Hunger!" (VAULT #16). I was wondering if you will ever reprint all of the old issues of MAD?

Jimmy Lambert

Bridgewater, NJ

As noted in these pages before, the rights to MAD are a separate property from the other ECs, a separate deal would have to be struck

-VK

VAULT #19 was a real treat. Since I had never read it before, it was like getting a new EC. Johnny Craig's handy cover really grabbed me

All the stories are good, but my favorite is "Notes to You!" Ambrose Baldwin reminded me somewhat of Ambrose Bierce (also called "Bitter Bierce") who was something of a poison pen writer himself before vanishing forever at the end of 1913. Bierce served with distinction in the Civil War and wrote some great horror tales afterwards

I especially enjoyed the choice of reading material displayed in Mr. Popkin's candy store (page 6, panel 2) - it shows he is a man of rare taste. Too bad such Mom and Pop-type stores seem to have gone the way of old Ambrose Bierce. Please print my address.

David C. Dalin

1204 N. 7th
Tacoma, WA 98403

Mom and Pop were replaced by Joe Fan!

-VK

I was going through my basement and I found a original 50s EC horror comic. The cover was missing, and I wanted to know what number it was, it contained the story "Sink-Hole!". All the stories were cool.

And "witch" comic contain these stories: "...And All Through the House...", "Came the Dawn!", "Mournin' Mess" and "Split Personality!"? Those were my favorite on HBO's "Tales from the Crypt," and I wanted to read them Please print my address

Jake Wagner

203 Carter RD
Paris, TX 38242

You found an old copy of VAULT 18 (our #7, available as a back issue). The stories you name are in: "House," VAULT 35 (in RCP VAULT 4, will be our #24); "Came," SHOCK 9 (available); "Mournin'," CRYPT 38 (will be #22) and "Split," VAULT 30 (our #19, available). **-VK**

This is my first letter so please don't chop up this letter! I was wondering what RCP stands for (since I've been collecting for a while I probably should know what it stands for but I don't)

They should have given you the TV. job instead of CK. I'm 11 years old and I would like a pen pal, please print my full address

Ryan Higgins

5841 Abbott AV
Edina, MN 55410

RCP stands for RUSS COCHRAN PUBLISHER, and was office shorthand for the company Russ started with. We use it now to mean Russ' line of 64-page EC comics reprints, which are still available as back issues.

I won't chop your letter up, but here comes Ed with his hatchet. Watch out! **-VK**

In VAULT #18 you printed my letter where I requested that you reprint all of the EC horror stories from the Pre-Trend, CRIME, SHOCK, W FAN #2, etc., put into additional issues of the 3 horror comics.

I don't know what it was about those old horror comics, but they had a magic. And I'm sure that they have not turned any of us into ax-murderers. It may just be a gentle way of preparing us for real life. But let's continue the "real thing" for as long as possible. Your friend,

Rick Jaeger

Honolulu, HI

We reprinted all the inside front covers, house ads and letters pages and Johnson Smith ads in the hardback EC LIBRARY, my set will shortly be back in print! Write and request ordering info!

Nope, no ax murderers here. Ed the editor does have a little hatchet, though. **-VK**

After recently receiving six of your annuals in the mail, I wanted to write to let you know how utterly delighted (and totally deranged) I was with them (CRYPT, VAULT, and

HAUNT, issues 1-5 and 6-10). These annuals are top quality and neatly bound, and I highly recommend them to your sinister subscribers

In CRYPT #4, you responded to a letter regarding the classic horror flick, TALES FROM THE CRYPT (1972), with a brief synopsis about the origins of these tales in your comics. I was hoping that you might do the same for the equally gruesome VAULT OF HORROR (1973), reissued as TALES FROM THE CRYPT, PART II, another film adaptation of EC comics. I One of my favorites, "Drawn And Quartered," a dastardly tale about an artist's voodoo revenge, first appeared in CRYPT 10. The other 4 tales portrayed bloodthirsty vampires ("Midnight Mess"), a neat freak's frightful fate ("The Neat Job"), a macabre magician's trick ("This Trick'll Kill You"), and a treacherous tale of grisly graveyard retribution ("Bargain In Death")

Joe Grotenrath II

Alexandria, VA

Thanks for the rundown. Now, if Ed will just put that hatchet down. . .say, Joe, how would you suggest I handle this guy?



Good idea! I'll act on this suggestion immediately. . . chop-chop! **-VK**

Also available this month are WEIRD FANTASY and TWO-FISTED TALES. Watch for HAUNT, CRIME and FRONTLINE COMBAT next month. Don't forget CRYPT, WEIRD SCIENCE and PANIC! Get them at your local comic book shop or SUBSCRIBE (see our ad in this comic)!

BACK ISSUES: CRYPT #1, sold out; FRONT #1-4, \$2 each; all others up thru issue #3, \$1.50 each; CRYPT, W SCI & SHOCK #4-16, and VAULT, W FAN, 2FIST, HAUNT and CRIME #4-15, \$2 each. All others, \$2.50 each (Latest issues: CRYPT, W SCI, VAULT, W FAN and 2FIST are up to 20, HAUNT & CRIME are up to 19, FRONT to 8 and PANIC to 2).

Don't forget the entire 11-issue run of WEIRD SCIENCE-FANTASY/INCREDIBLE SCIENCE FICTION (#1-3, \$1.50 each; #4-11, \$2 each) and the 18 issues of SHOCK SUSPENSTORIES (#1-3, \$1.50 each; #4-15, \$2.00 each; #16-18, \$2.50 each)!

Add \$5 per order (\$10 outside US) for S&H.

We want letters! Write to
VAULT
GEMSTONE
POB 469
WEST PLAINS MO 65775

THIS COMIC REPRINTS

VAULT OF HORROR "#31" (#20, JUN/JUL 1953)

COVER by Johnny Craig

"Easel Kill Ya!"

"Peach of a Plot!"

"The Lake"

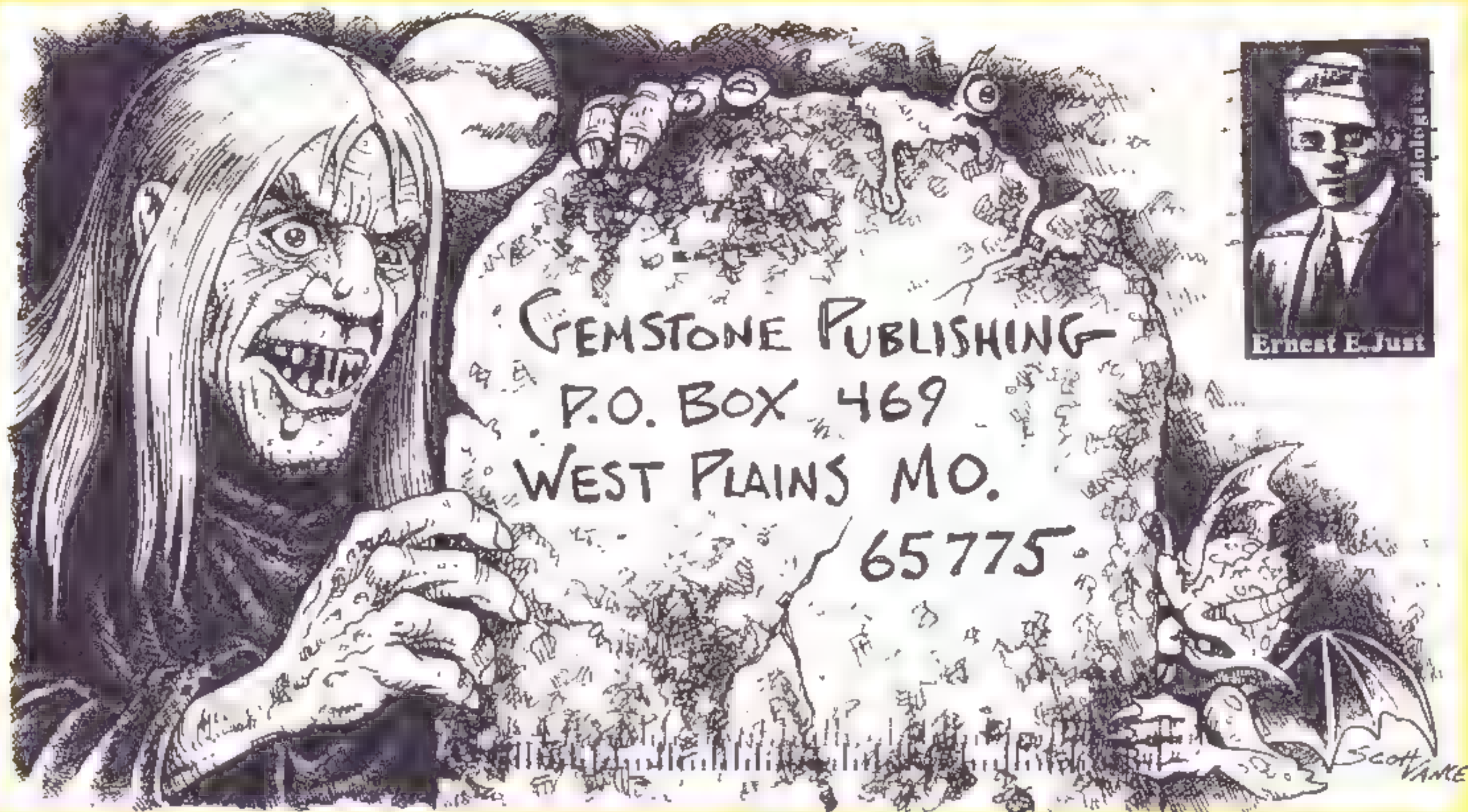
"One Good Turn..."

Johnny Craig

Jack Davis

art by Joe Orlando

Graham Ingels



Above, witness the envelope sent by Scott Vane, S ST Paul, MN; he drew the entire thing. (Minus the stamp. Or, did he draw the stamp, too? Naughty, naughty!) The post person gave us a good looking-over upon delivery. That's okay, though. And, we'll leave a little something in his sock this Christmas-his foot! Heh, heh! Our stamp of approval goes on this and all submissions to THE CRYPT-KEEPER'S PAGE OF...

FINE ARTS #54

The esoteric essays of Richard Jaeger, Honolulu, HI, are little works of literary art, so I'm running his latest here in my "Fine Arts" page.

MONEY OR MYSTERY?

Mystery is a deep thing. Very deep. It is a distinct flavor in your life. It is seeing through wonder-filled eyes. But you must choose between money and mystery. You cannot have both

You may have the entire set of the original ECs, all in pristine mint condition. They are all in acid-free holders. You never remove them. Fingerprints would lower their value

You may be able to get a million dollars for them now. When you're 80 you may get a billion. And you'll have missed it all.

You'll have missed the spirit of EC. You'll have chosen the money world over the magic world. Let's say that you are old enough to have bought the original HAUNT #1 in 1950. If you take the pristine mint copy that you now have out of its plastic holder, you can hold it in your hands as you did in 1950

You will be back in 1950 again, when you were a wonder-filled child. You can gently touch the cover. You will notice that wonderful smell that came out of that giant box of

comic books that your friend up the block had. And if you get a little bit of water on it and it starts to shrivel up, then it will begin to look like the ECs that I had as a kid. The three hosts called them rags, but these rags were the world to me.

Later you can put the comic back in the plastic envelope. All through the next weary day at work you can dream about that special time later at night when the ECs will once more leave their holders and actually be in your hands again. You will be in that dream-state once more, and it will be so good for your health.

The eight-year-olds of today are now buying Russ' reprints. 40 years from now these will be their "real-thing," to them incomparably more valuable than the originals of the 50s

Richard Jaeger

Honolulu, HI

Substitute the phrase CRYPT OF TERROR #1 in the above and you've got a sentiment both true and beautiful. (But, what did make your friend smell like a giant box of comics? Eau de Libre Comique? -CK



Send your contris (not returnable, not too long, not too big, legible doublespaced text &/or bold black art. Warning...we edit) to:

THE CRYPT-KEEPER'S PAGE OF FINE ARTS

GEMSTONE

POB 469

WEST PLAINS MO 65775

We welcome contributions. We cannot promise to return, acknowledge or publish contributions. We edit for clarity, accuracy and size. We automatically withhold street address and zip code unless you clearly state you wish them published. We attempt to acknowledge publication; to do so we need your address on the individual contribution.

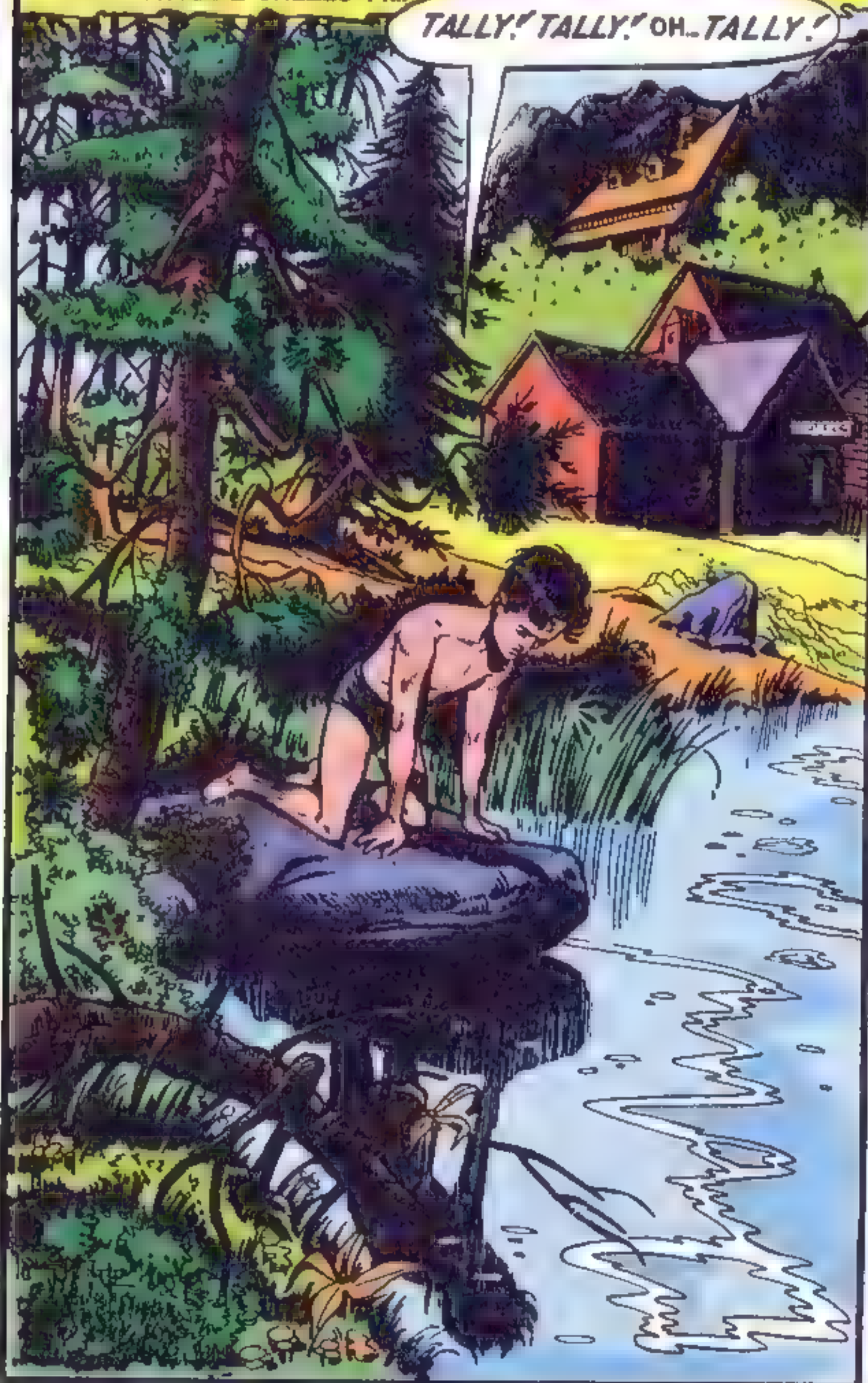
HERE IS MY ADAPTATION OF
RAY BRADBURY'S...

The Lake



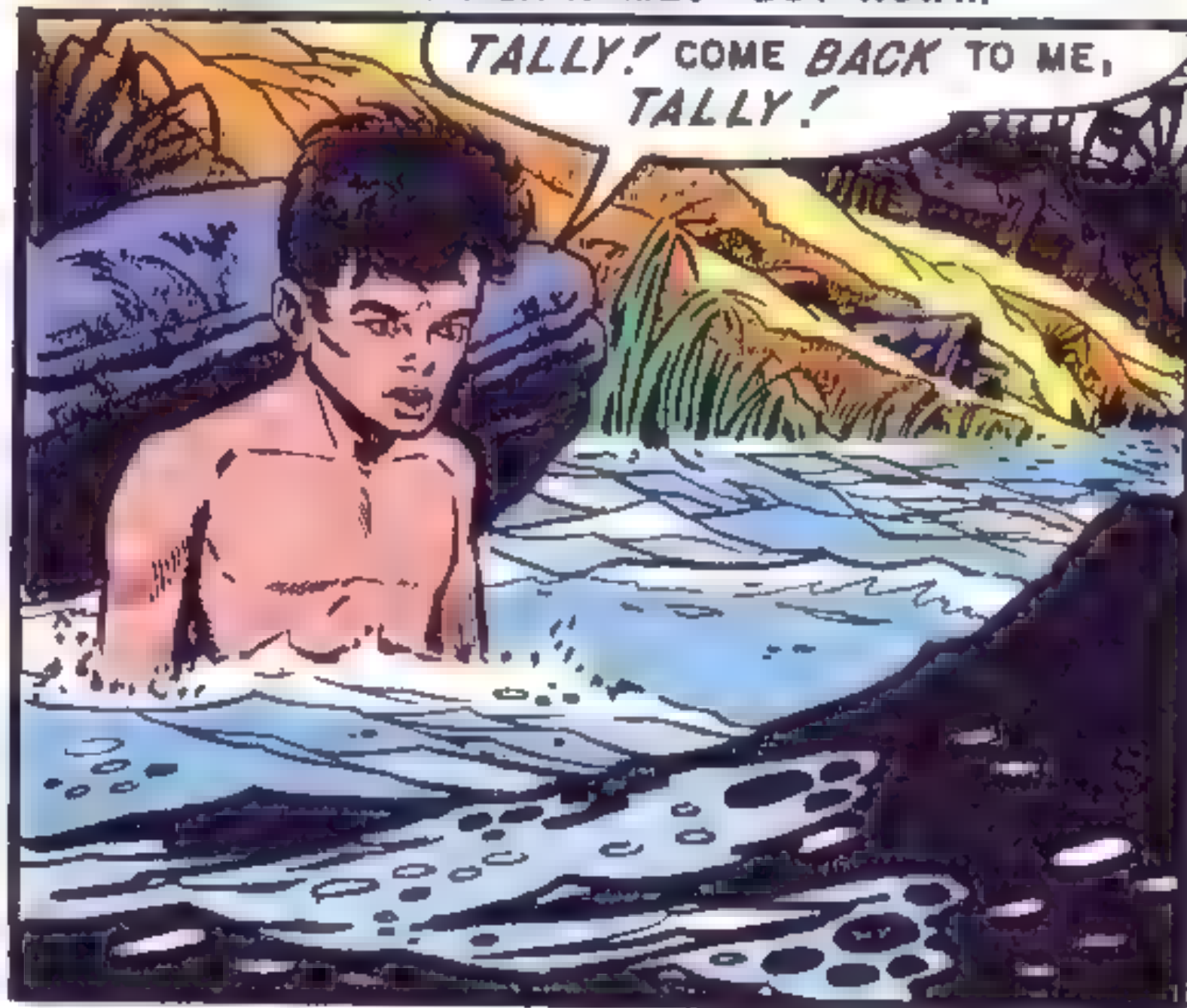
IT WAS SEPTEMBER... IN THE LAST DAYS WHEN THINGS ARE GETTING SAD FOR NO REASON. THE BEACH WAS LONG AND LONELY. ALL OF THE HOT DOG STANDS WERE BOARDED UP WITH STRIPS OF GOLDEN PLANKING, SEALING IN THE MUSTARD, ONION, MEAT ODORS OF THE LONG, JOYFUL SUMMER. IT WAS LIKE NAILING SUMMER INTO A SERIES OF COFFINS. THE WIND HAD COME AND TOUCHED THE SAND, BLOWING AWAY ALL OF THE MILLION FOOTPRINTS OF JULY AND AUGUST. I WAS ALONE. I CALLED HER NAME. A DOZEN TIMES I CALLED IT...

TALLY! TALLY! OH... TALLY!

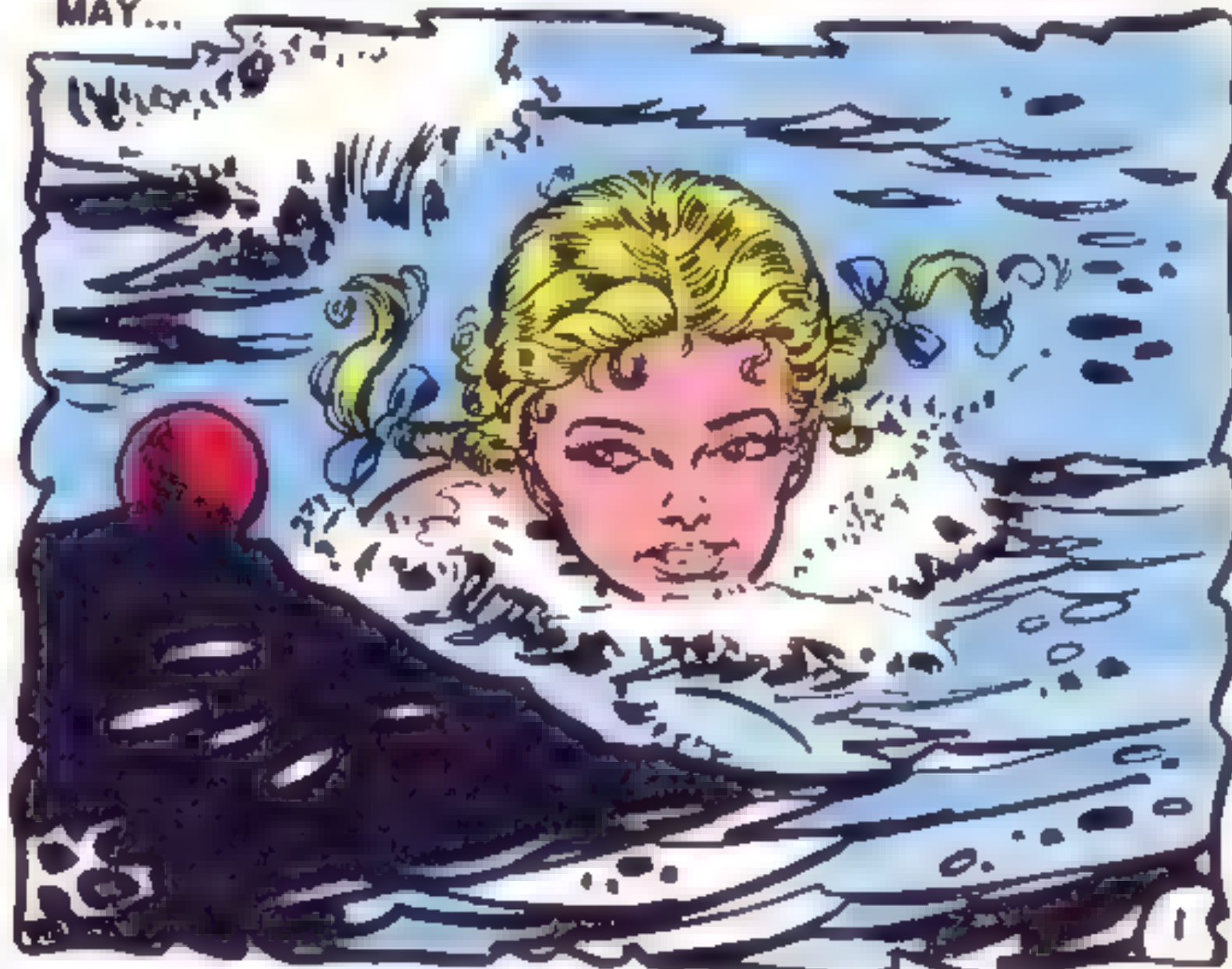


EVERYONE ELSE WAS IN SCHOOL. I WAS NOT. TOMORROW, I WOULD BE ON MY WAY WEST ON A TRAIN. I HAD COME TO THE BEACH FOR ONE LAST BRIEF MOMENT. I WENT DOWN TO THE WATER AND LET IT COOL UP TO MY STOMACH. ALWAYS BEFORE, WITH THE CROWD, I HADN'T DARED TO LOOK, TO COME TO THIS SPOT AND SEARCH AROUND IN THE WATER AND CALL HER NAME. BUT NOW...

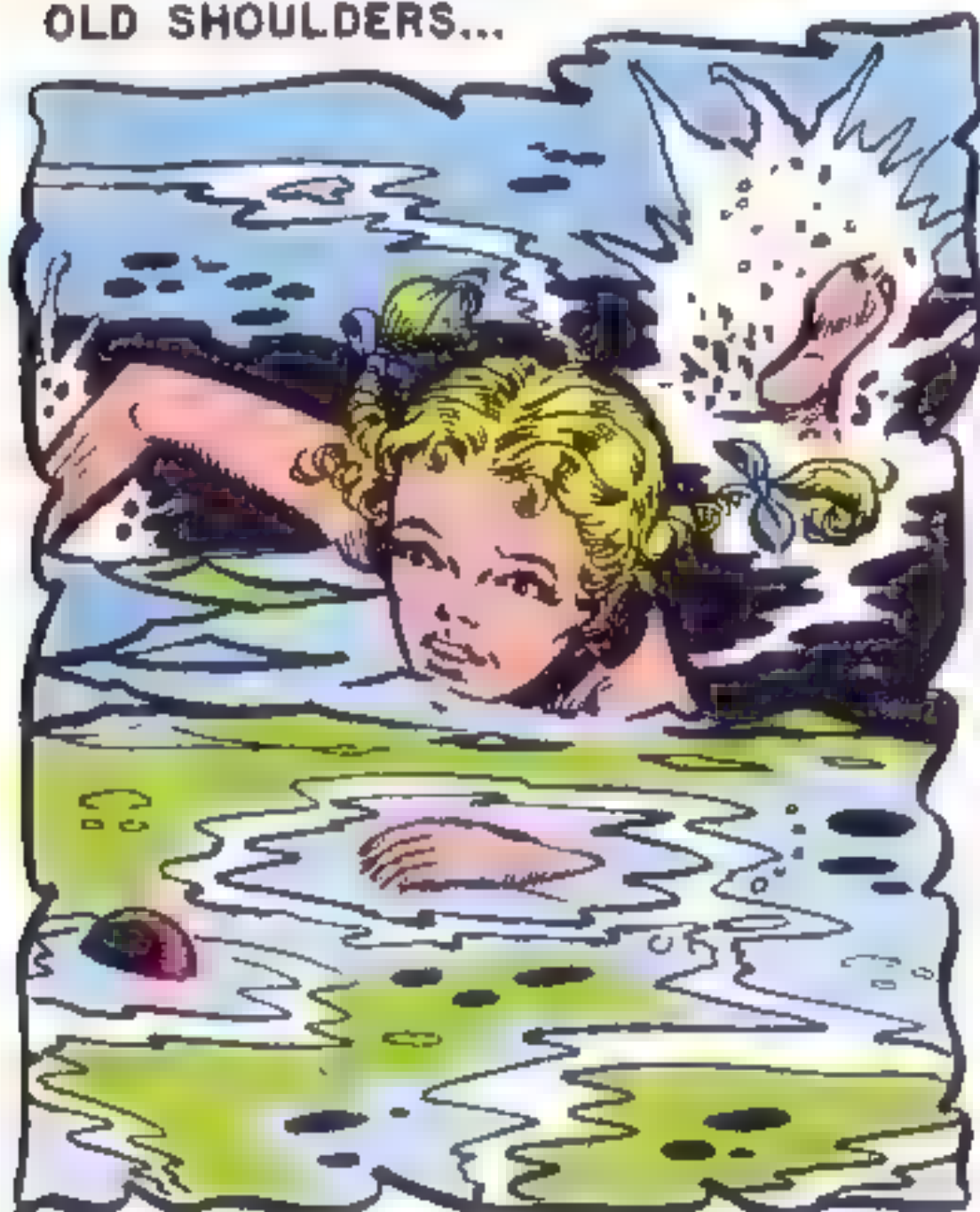
TALLY! COME BACK TO ME, TALLY!



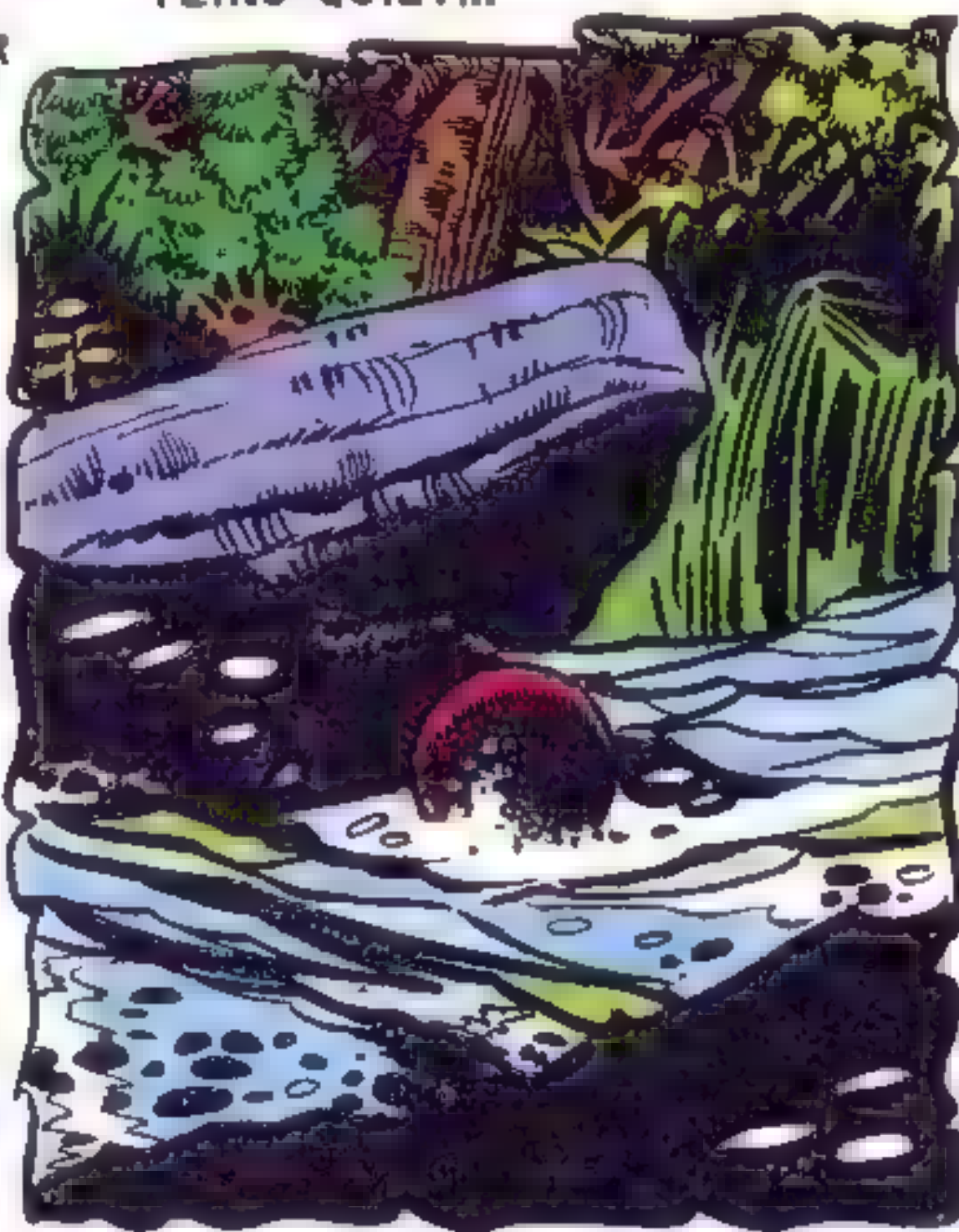
FUNNY, BUT YOU REALLY EXPECT ANSWERS TO YOUR CALLING WHEN YOU ARE YOUNG. YOU FEEL THAT WHATEVER YOU MAY THINK CAN BE REAL. AND SOMETIMES, THAT IS NOT SO WRONG. I THOUGHT OF TALLY, SWIMMING OUT INTO THE WATER... LAST MAY...



TALLY...WITH HER PIGTAILS TRAILING, BLONDE. SHE WAS LAUGHING, AND THE SUN WAS ON HER SMALL TWELVE YEAR OLD SHOULDERS...



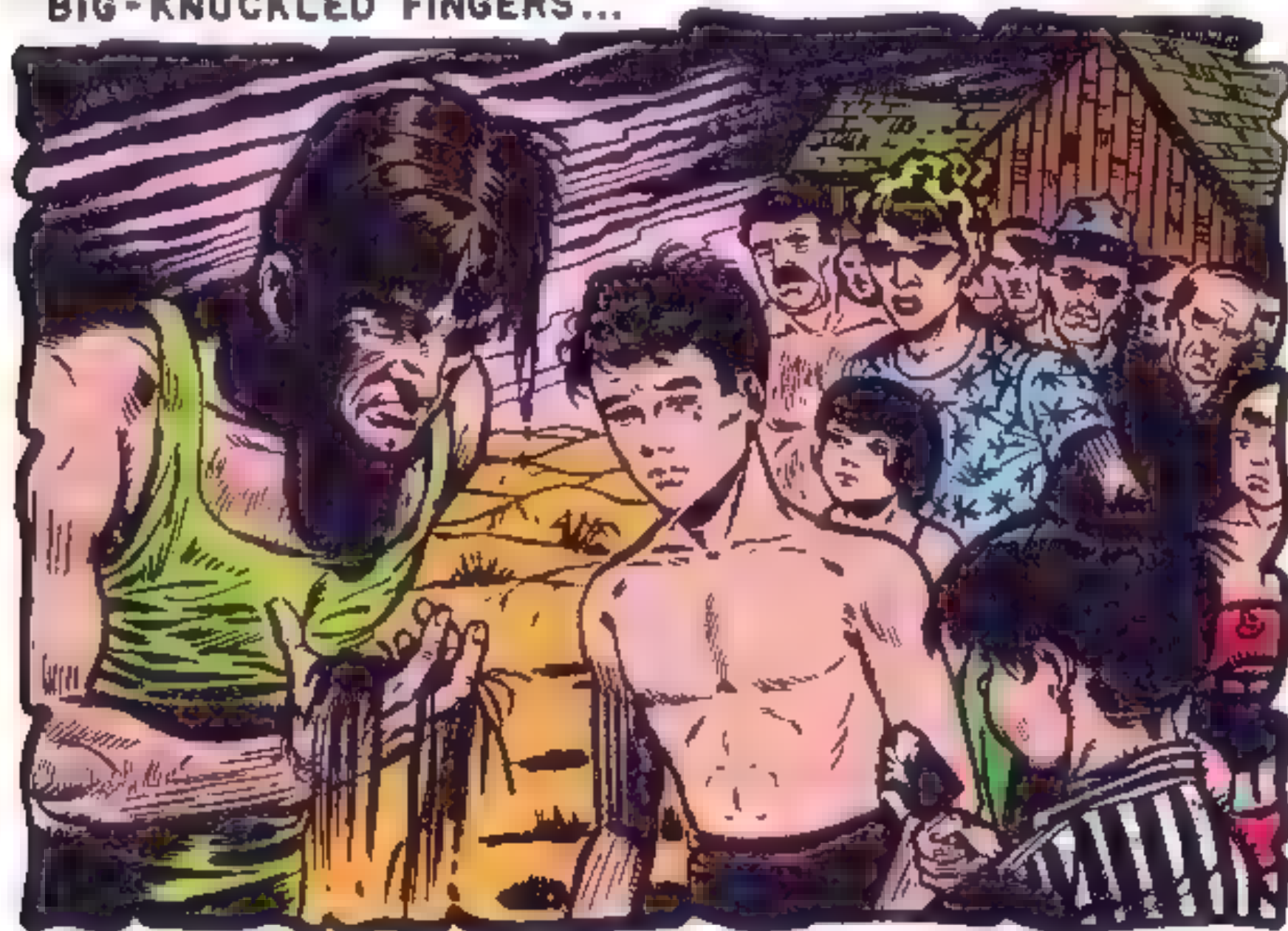
I THOUGHT OF THE WATER SETTLING QUIET...



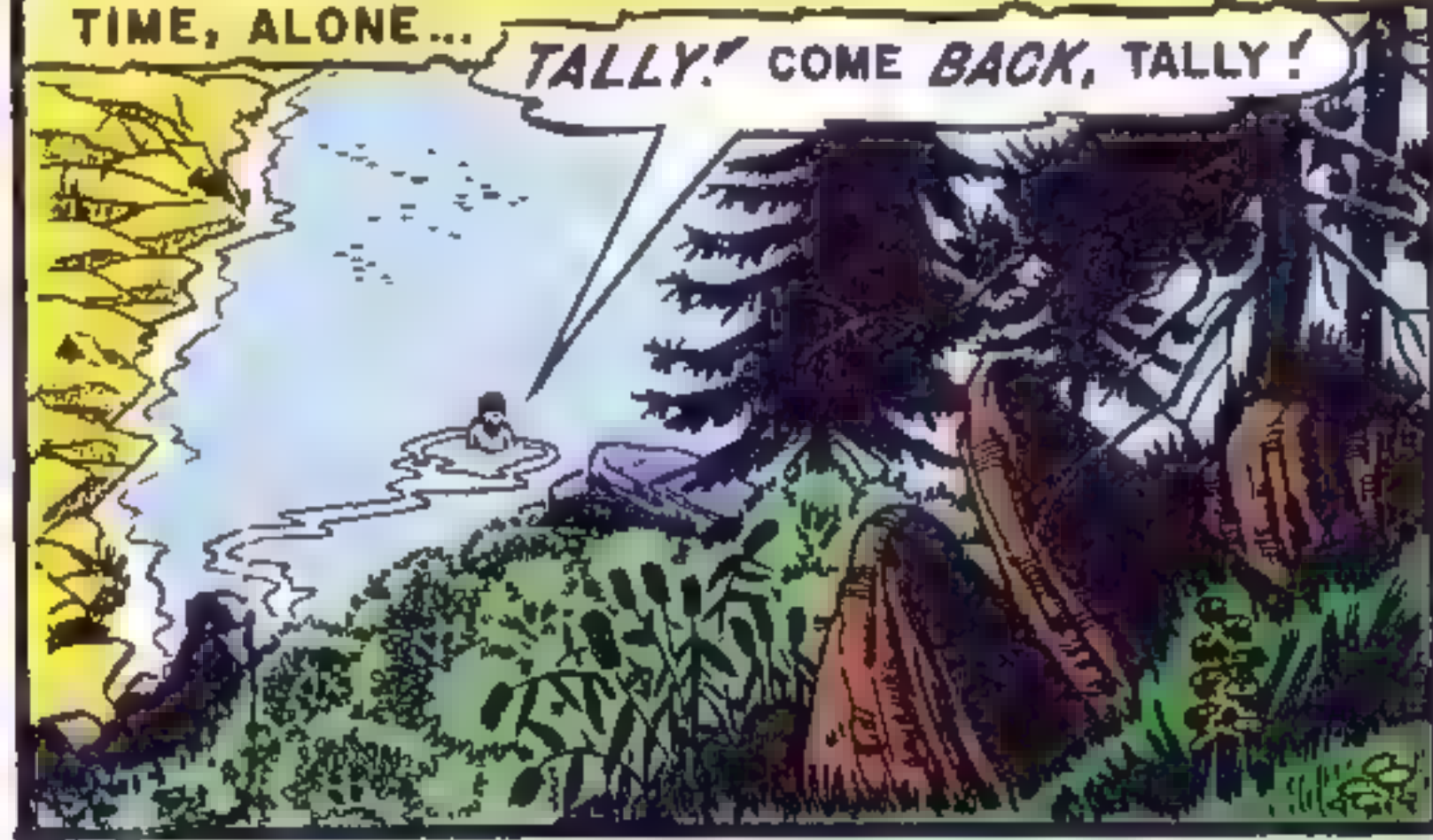
...OF THE LIFEGUARD LEAPING INTO IT... OF TALLY'S MOTHER SCREAMING... **MY BABY!**



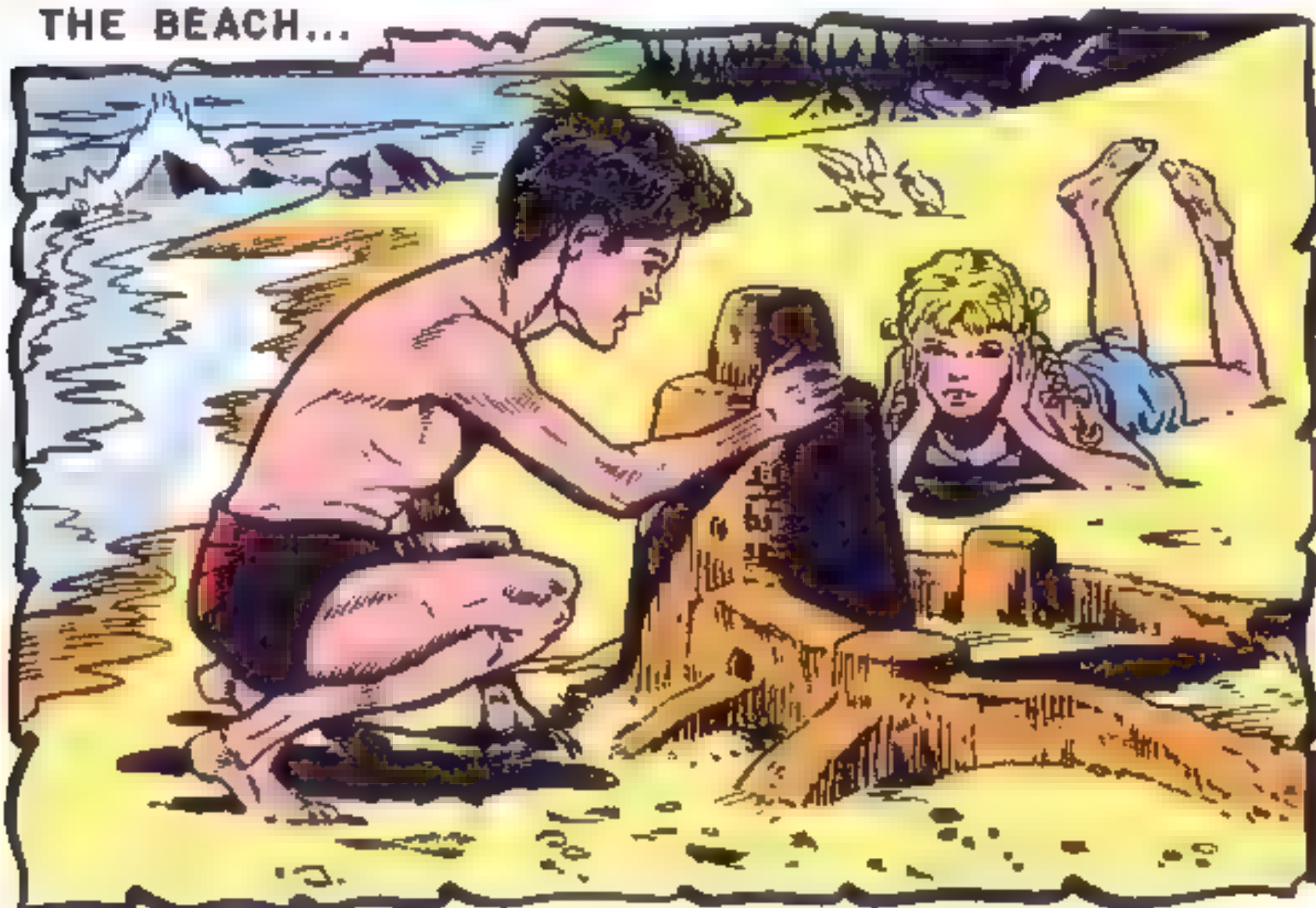
TALLY NEVER CAME OUT. THE LIFEGUARD TRIED TO PERSUADE HER TO COME OUT, BUT SHE DID NOT. HE CAME BACK WITH ONLY BITS OF WATER-WEED IN HIS BIG-KNUCKLED FINGERS...



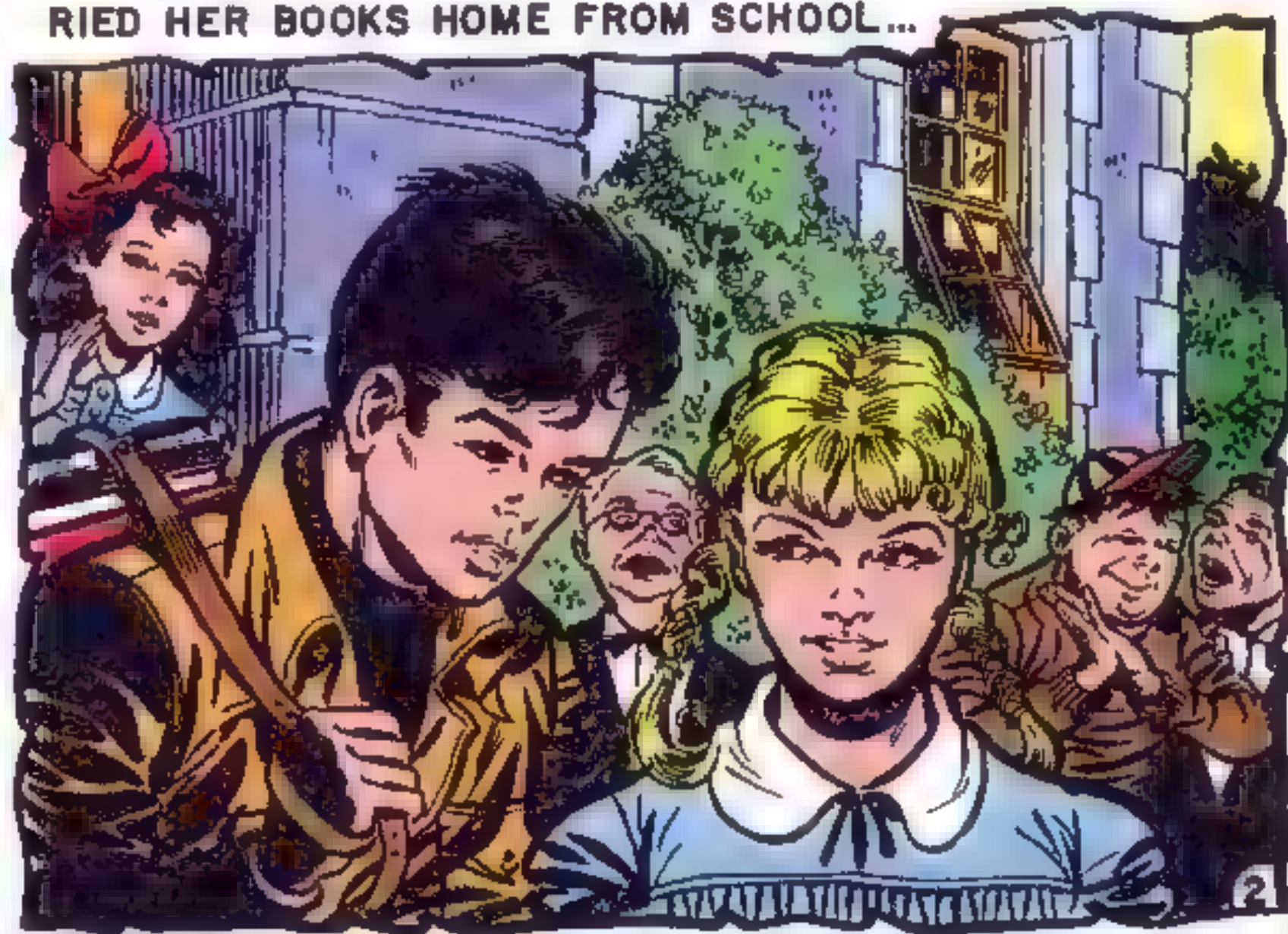
TALLY WAS GONE. SHE WOULD NOT SIT ACROSS FROM ME AT SCHOOL ANY LONGER, OR CHASE INDOOR BALLS ON THE BRICK STREETS ON SUMMER NIGHTS. SHE HAD GONE OUT TOO FAR AND THE LAKE WOULD NOT LET HER RETURN. AND NOW IN THE LONELY AUTUMN WHEN THE SKY WAS HUGE AND THE WATER WAS HUGE AND THE BEACH WAS SO VERY LONG, I HAD COME DOWN FOR THE LAST TIME, ALONE...



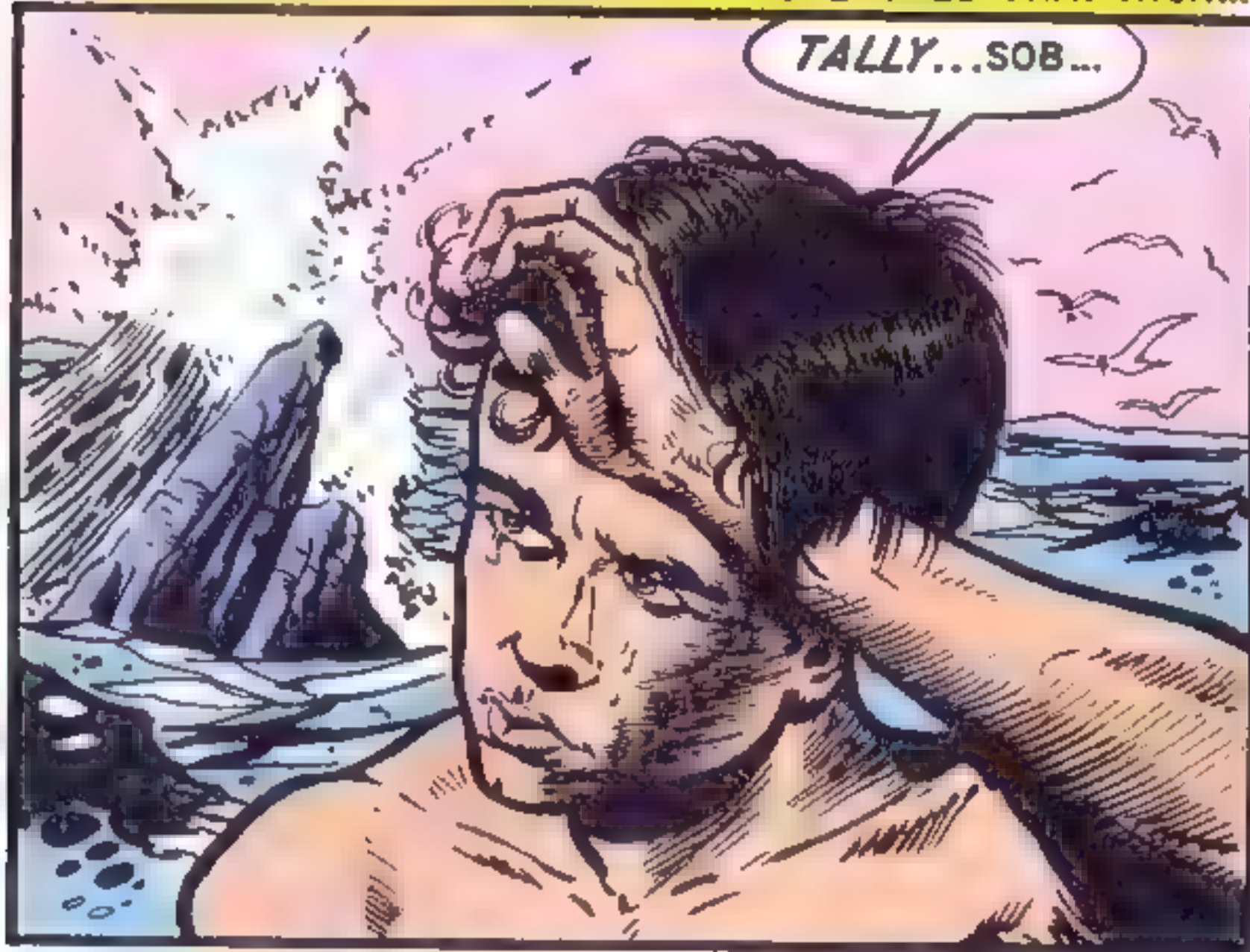
I WAS ONLY TWELVE. BUT I KNOW HOW MUCH I LOVED HER. IT WAS THAT LOVE THAT COMES BEFORE ALL SIGNIFICANCE OF BODY AND MORALS. IT WAS A LOVE THAT WAS MADE OF WARM LONG DAYS TOGETHER AT THE BEACH...



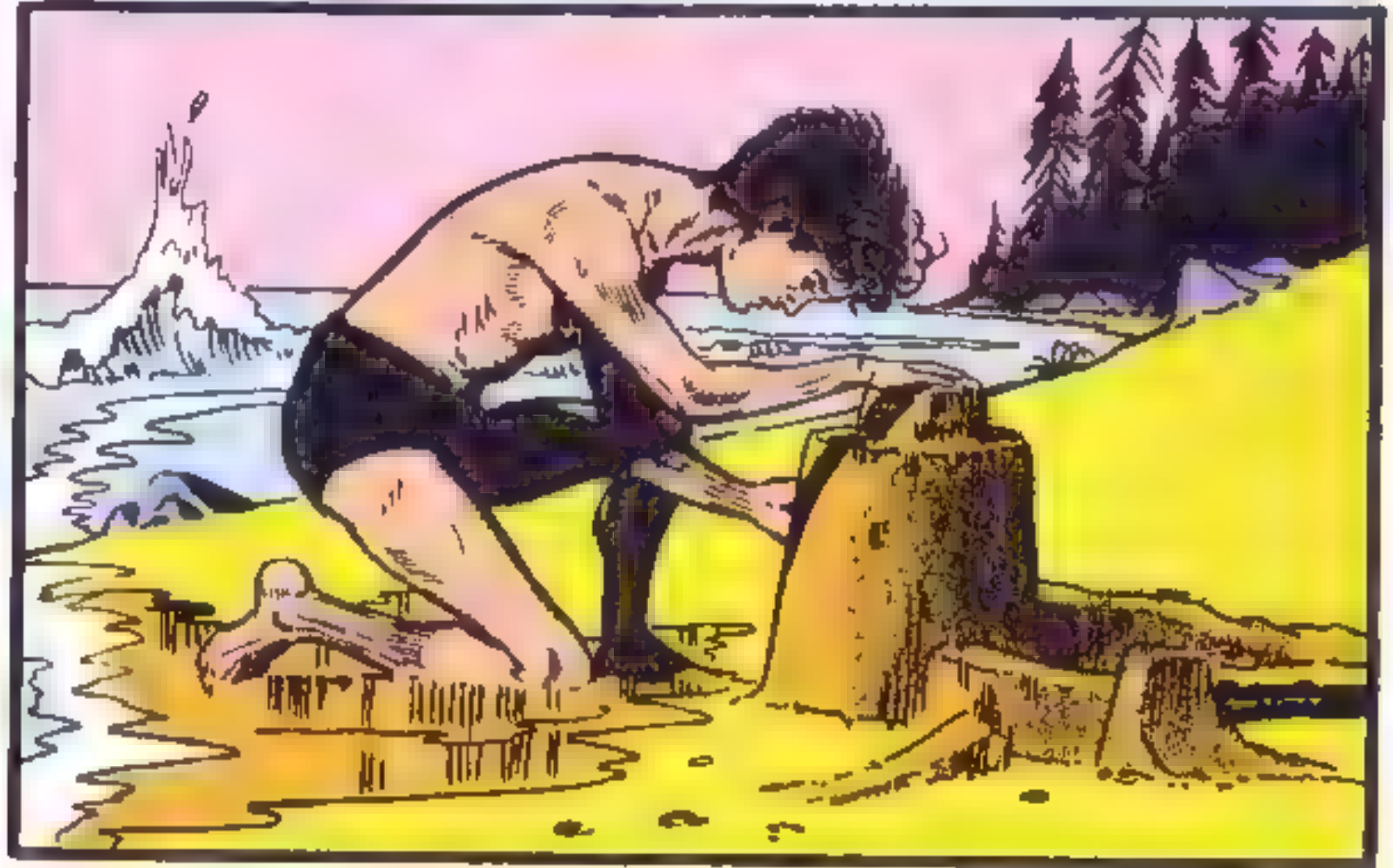
IT WAS MADE OF THE HUMMING QUIET DAYS OF DRONING EDUCATION AT THE SCHOOL, AND ALL THE LONG AUTUMN DAYS OF THE YEARS PAST WHEN I HAD CARRIED HER BOOKS HOME FROM SCHOOL...



I CALLED HER NAME FOR THE LAST TIME. I SHIVERED. I FELT WATER ON MY FACE AND DID NOT KNOW HOW IT GOT THERE. THE WAVES HAD NOT SPLASHED THAT HIGH...



TURNING, I RETREATED TO THE SAND AND STOOD THERE FOR HALF AN HOUR, HOPING FOR ONE GLIMPSE, ONE SIGN, ONE LITTLE BIT OF TALLY TO REMEMBER. THEN, I KNELT AND BUILT A SAND CASTLE, SHAPING IT FINE, BUILDING IT AS TALLY AND I HAD OFTEN BUILT SO MANY OF THEM...



BUT THIS TIME, I ONLY BUILT HALF A SAND CASTLE. THEN I GOT UP...



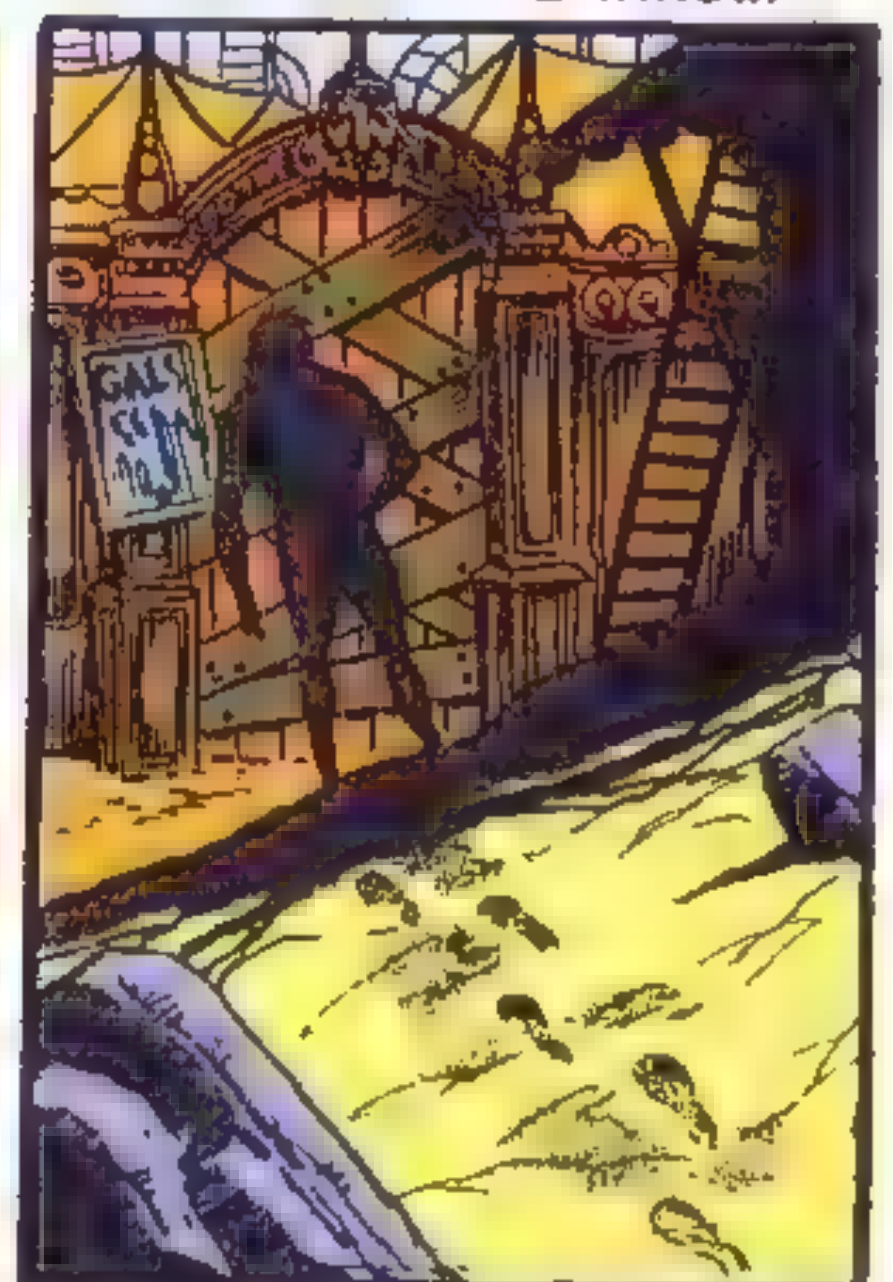
AFTER A WHILE, THE WATER CAME IN...



...BLENDING THE SAND-CASTLE, MASHING IT DOWN, LITTLE BY LITTLE, INTO THE ORIGINAL SMOOTHNESS...



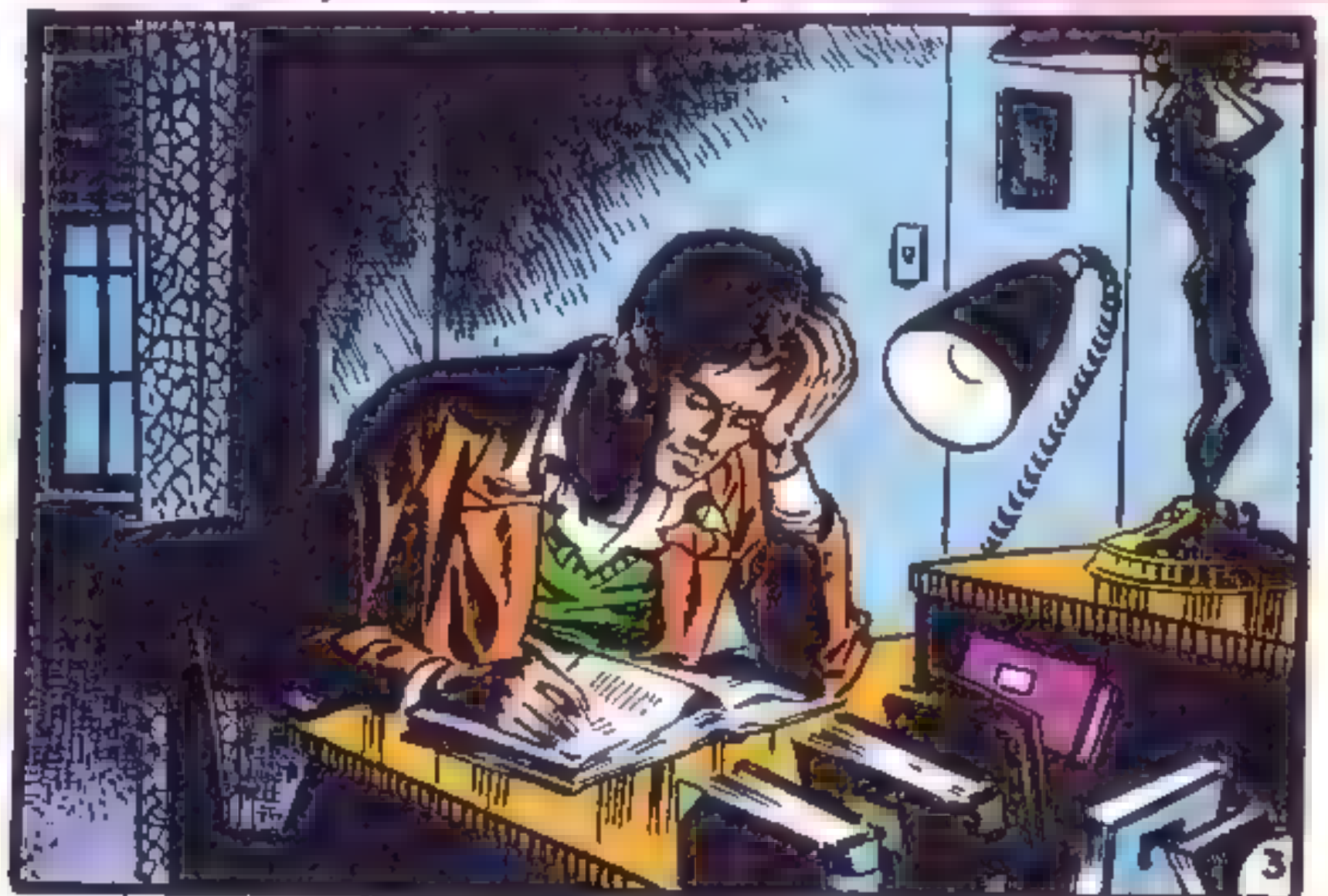
SILENTLY I WALKED ALONG THE SHORE. FAR AWAY, A MERRY-GO-ROUND JANGLED FAINTLY...BUT IT WAS ONLY THE WIND...



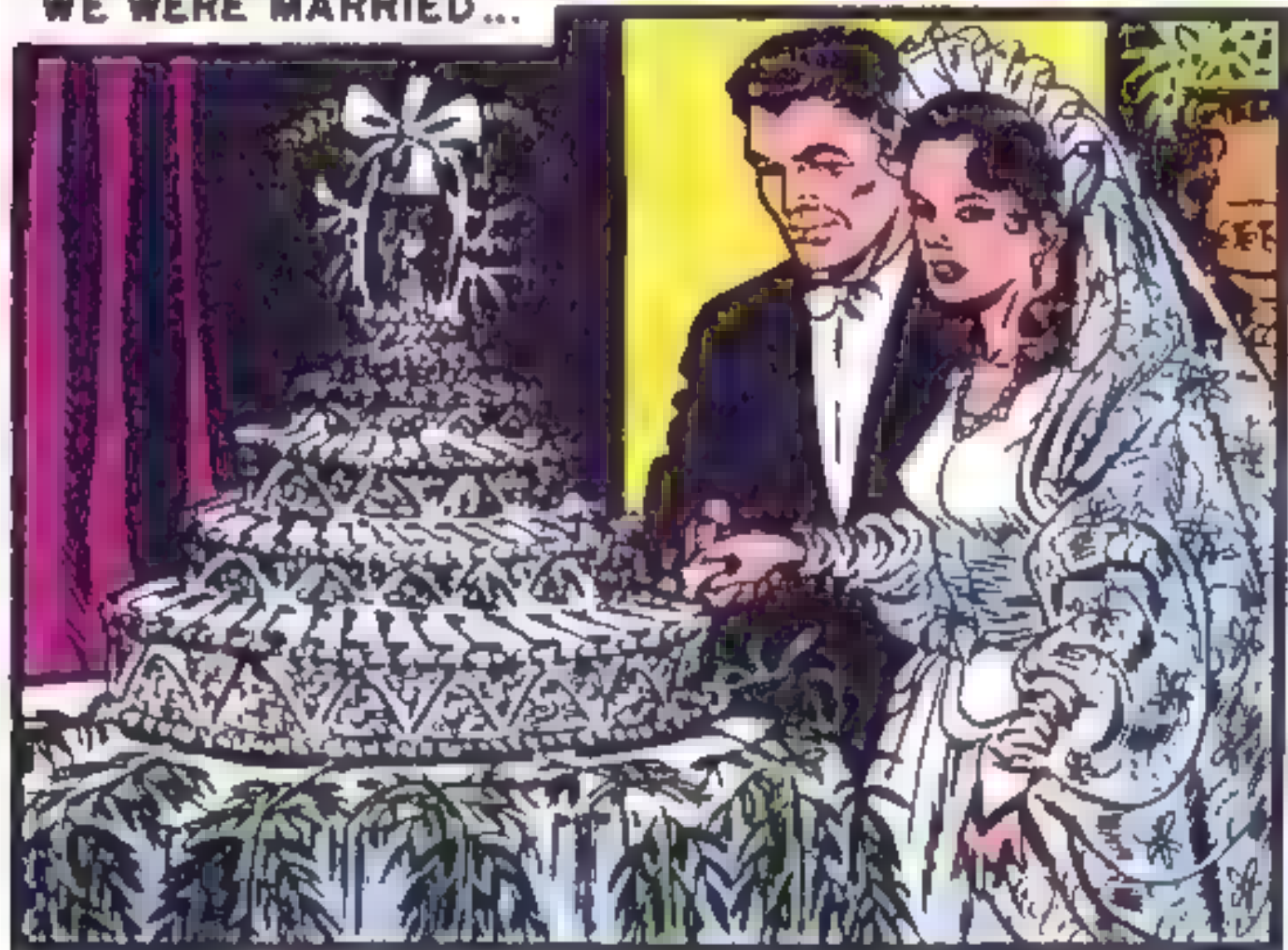
THE NEXT DAY I WENT AWAY ON THE TRAIN. A TRAIN HAS POOR MEMORY. IT SOON PUTS ALL BEHIND IT. IT FORGETS THE CORN LANDS AND RIVERS OF CHILDHOOD, THE BRIDGES, THE LAKES, THE VALLEYS, THE COTTAGES, THE HURTS AND THE JOYS. IT SPREADS THEM OUT BEHIND AND THEY DROP BACK OF THE HORIZON...



I LENGTHENED MY BONES, PUT FLESH ON THEM, CHANGED MY YOUNG MIND FOR AN OLDER ONE, THREW AWAY CLOTHES AS THEY NO LONGER FITTED, SHIFTED FROM GRAMMAR TO HIGH SCHOOL, TO COLLEGE BOOKS, TO LAW BOOKS...



AND THEN THERE WAS A YOUNG WOMAN...MARGARET... IN SACRAMENTO. I KNEW HER FOR A TIME, AND WE WERE MARRIED...



LAKE BLUFF, POPULATION 10,000, CAME UP OVER THE SKY. MARGARET LOOKED SO HANDSOME IN HER FINE NEW CLOTHES. SHE WATCHED ME AS I FELT MY OLD WORLD GATHER ME BACK INTO ITS LIVING. SHE HELD MY ARM AS THE TRAIN SLID INTO BLUFF STATION, AND OUR BAGGAGE WAS ESCORTED OUT...



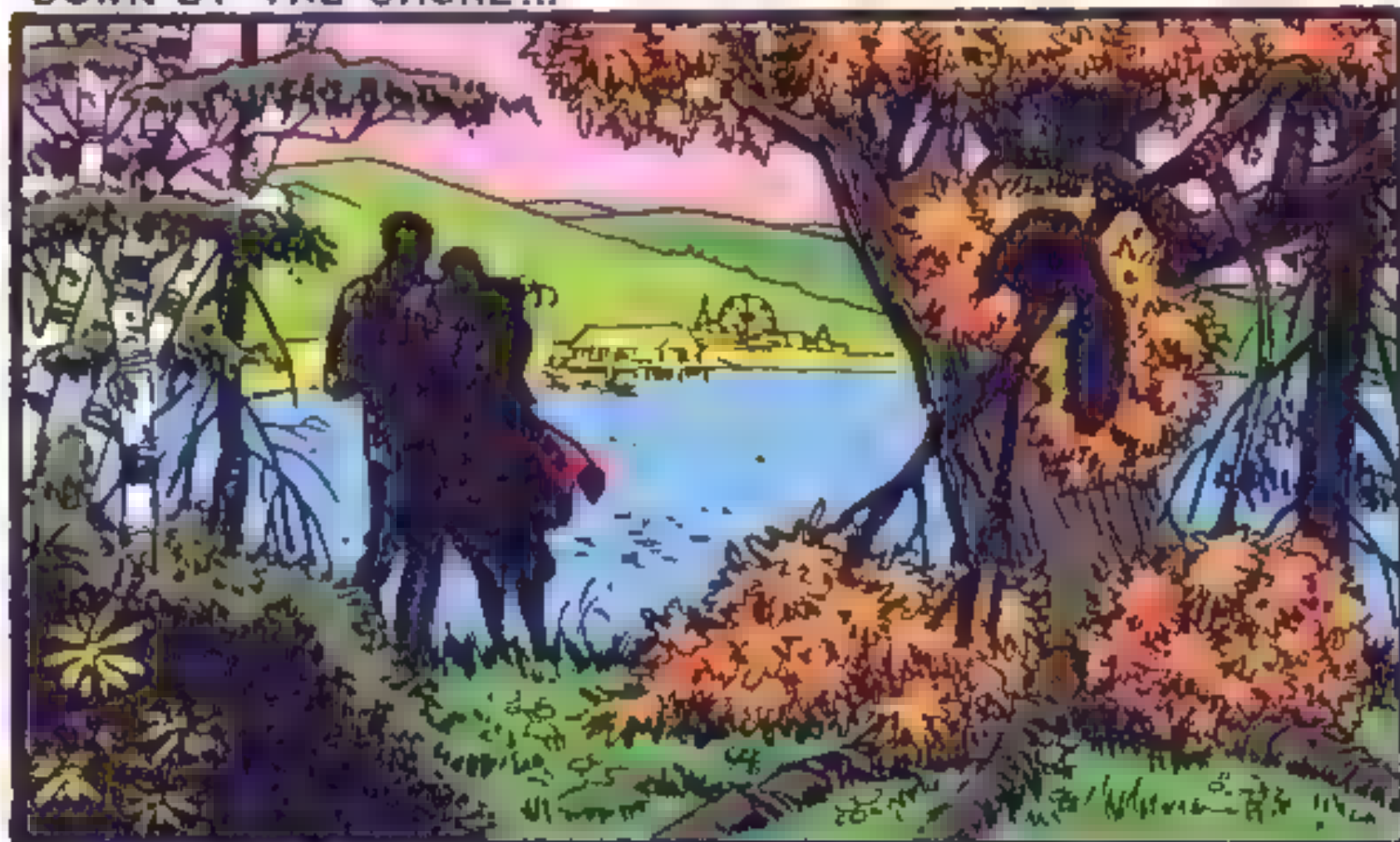
I HAD THAT FEELING AGAIN OF WANTING TO BE ALONE. BUT I COULD NOT FORCE MYSELF TO SPEAK OF THIS TO MARGARET...



AND WE CAME BACK...BACK TO LAKE BLUFF...FOR OUR HONEY MOON. LIKE A MEMORY, A TRAIN WORKS BOTH WAYS. A TRAIN CAN BRING RUSHING BACK ALL THOSE THINGS YOU LEFT BEHIND SO MANY YEARS BEFORE...



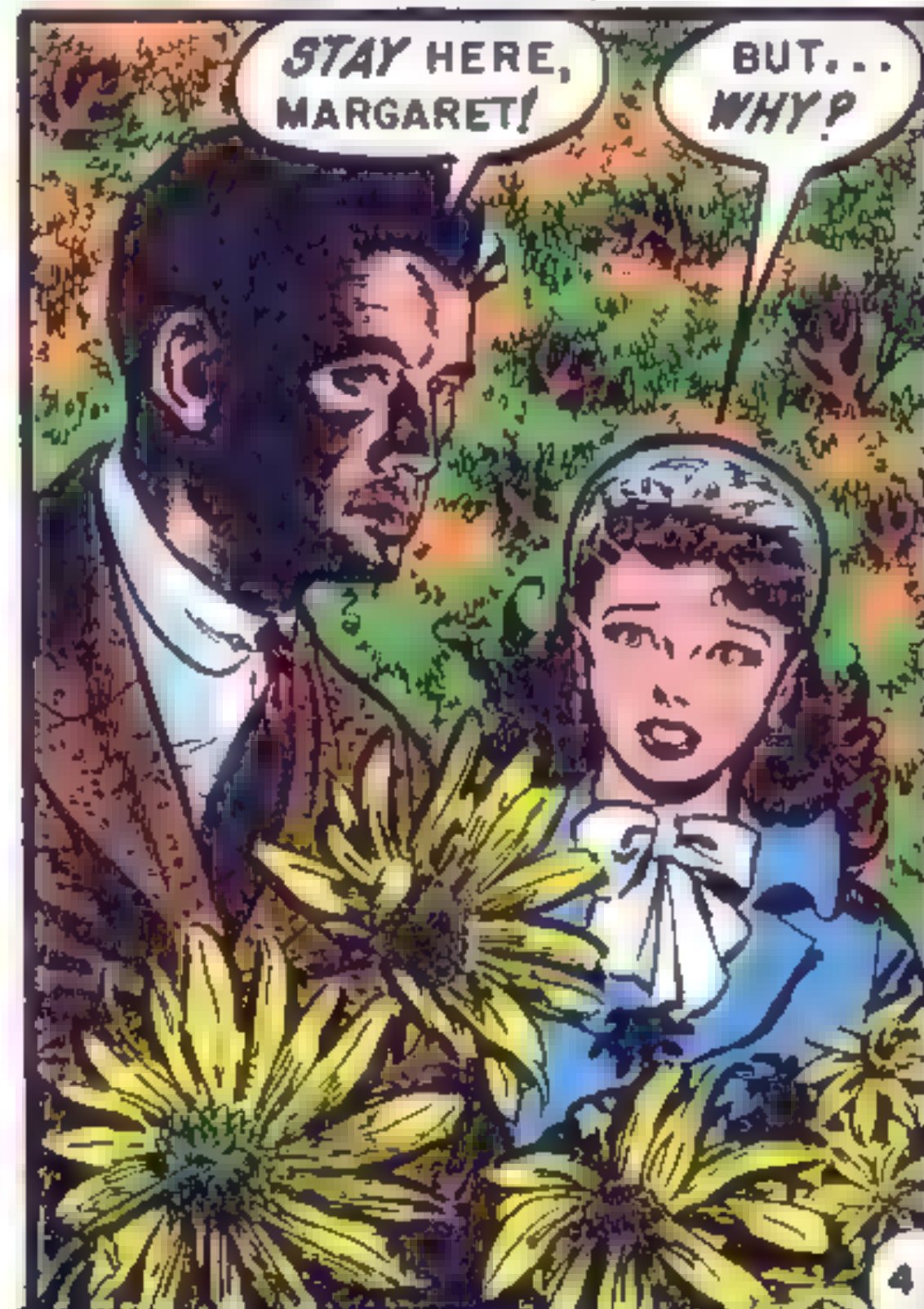
WE STAYED ON TWO WEEKS IN ALL, REVISITING ALL THE PLACES TOGETHER. THE DAYS WERE HAPPY. I THOUGHT I LOVED MARGARET WELL. AT LEAST I THOUGHT I DID. IT WAS ON ONE OF THE LAST DAYS THAT WE WALKED DOWN BY THE SHORE...



IT WAS LATE IN THE DAY. THE BEACH WAS ALMOST DESERTED. THE LIFEGUARD BOAT PULLED UP ON THE SHORE. THE LIFEGUARD STEPPED OUT OF IT, SLOWLY, WITH SOMETHING IN HIS ARMS...



I FROZE THERE. I HELD MY BREATH AND I FELT SMALL... ONLY TWELVE YEARS OLD, VERY LITTLE, VERY INFINITESIMAL AND AFRAID...



THE WIND HOWLED. I COULD NOT SEE MARGARET. I COULD SEE ONLY THE BEACH, THE LIFEGUARD SLOWLY EMERGING FROM THE BOAT WITH A GREY SACK IN HIS HANDS, NOT VERY HEAVY, AND HIS FACE ALMOST AS GREY AND LINED...



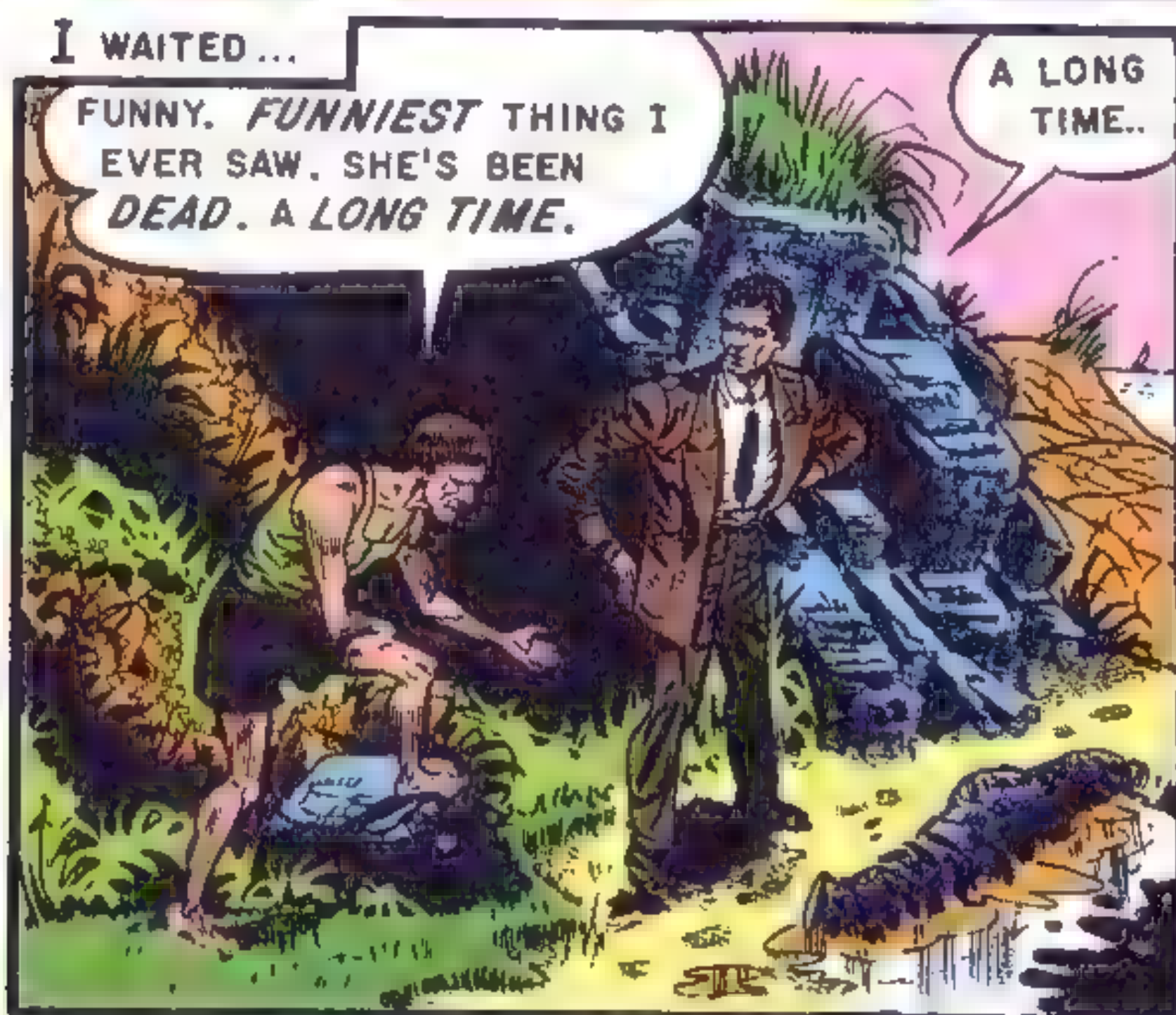
I WALKED SLOWLY DOWN THE SAND TO WHERE THE LIFEGUARD STOOD. HE LOOKED AT ME...



THE LIFEGUARD KEPT LOOKING AT ME FOR A LONG TIME AND HE COULDN'T SPEAK. HE PUT THE GREY SACK DOWN ON THE SAND, AND THE WATER WHISPERED WET UP AROUND IT AND WENT BACK...



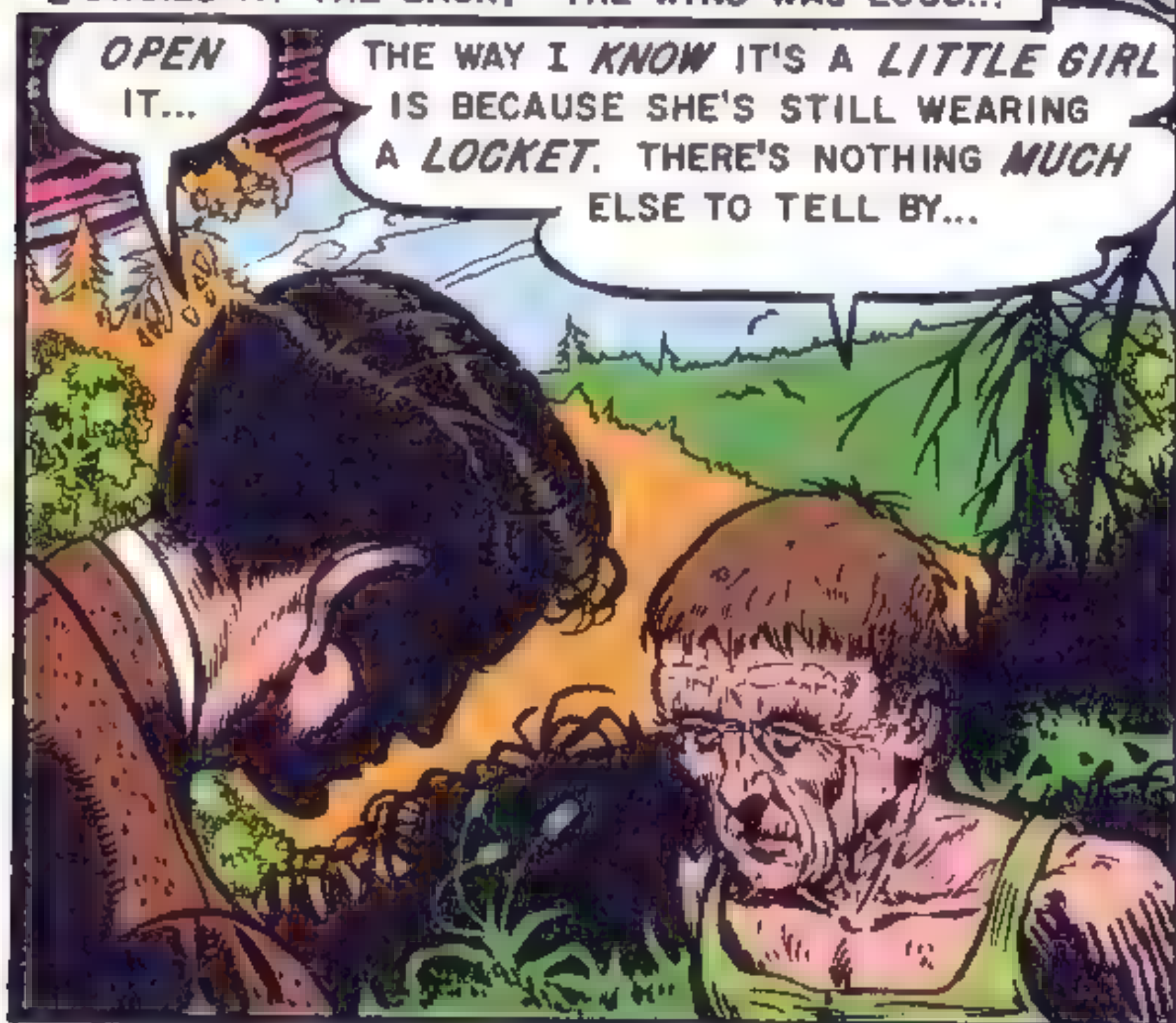
I WAITED...



HE NODDED...



I STARED AT THE SACK. THE WIND WAS LOUD...

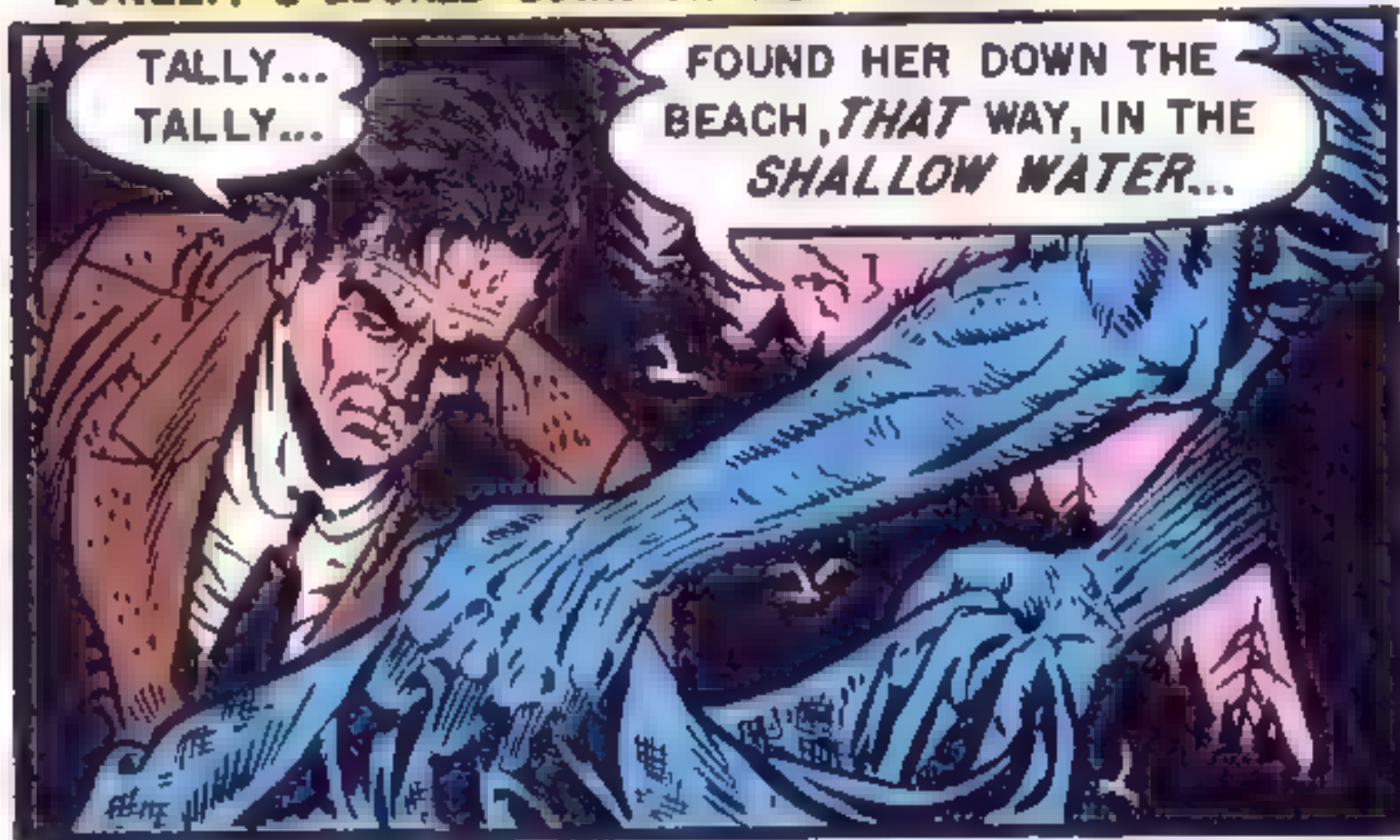


HURRY, MAN!
OPEN IT!

I BETTER NOT.
IT'S...IT'S NOT
VERY PLEASANT...

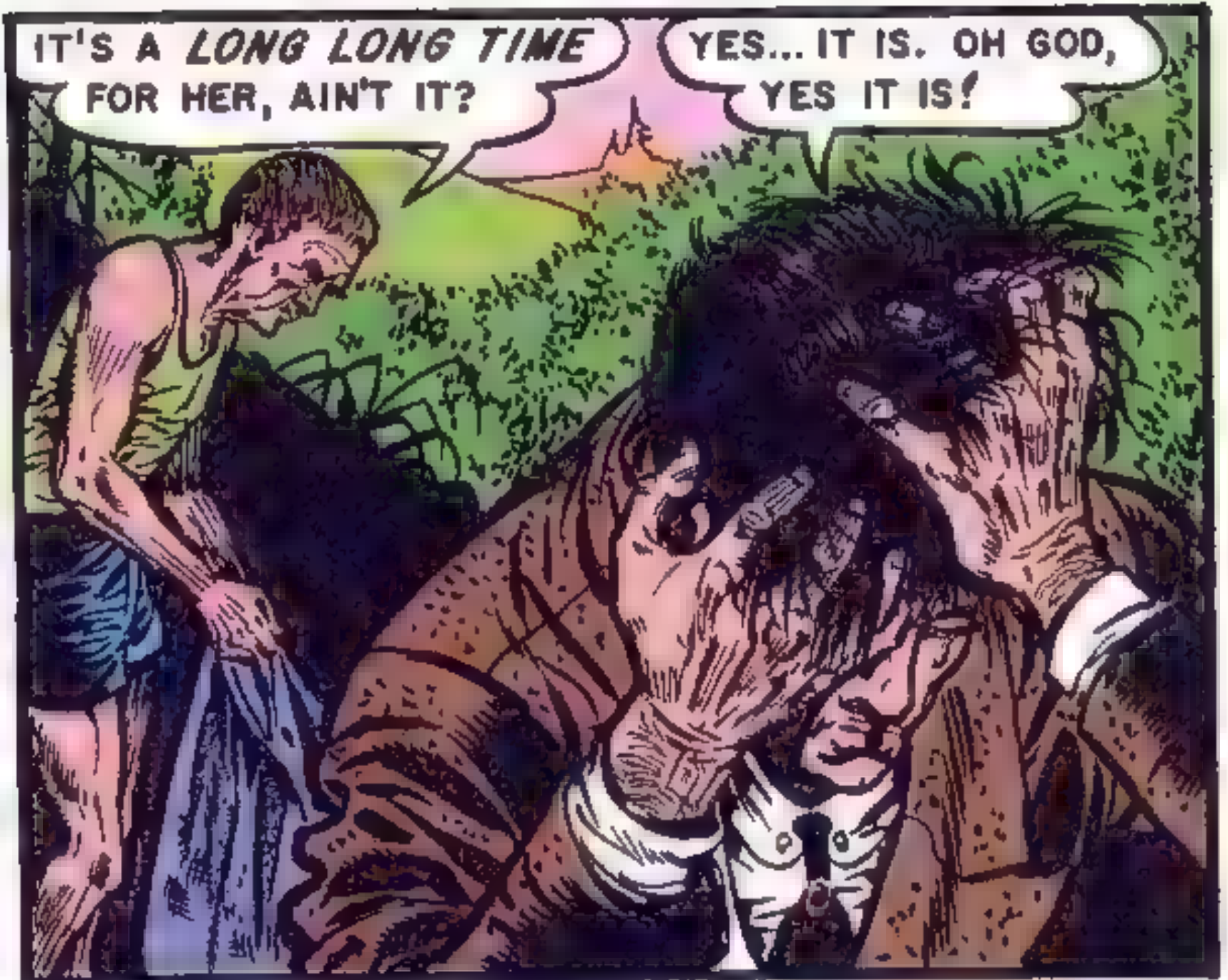


THEN, PERHAPS HE SAW THE WAY MY FACE MUST HAVE LOOKED. HE FUMBLING WITH THE SACK, OPENING IT ONLY PART WAY. IT WAS ENOUGH. THERE WAS ONLY THE SKY AND THE WIND AND THE WATER AND AUTUMN COMING ON LONELY. I LOOKED DOWN AT HER THERE...



IT'S A LONG LONG TIME FOR HER, AIN'T IT?

YES... IT IS. OH GOD, YES IT IS!



I THOUGHT...

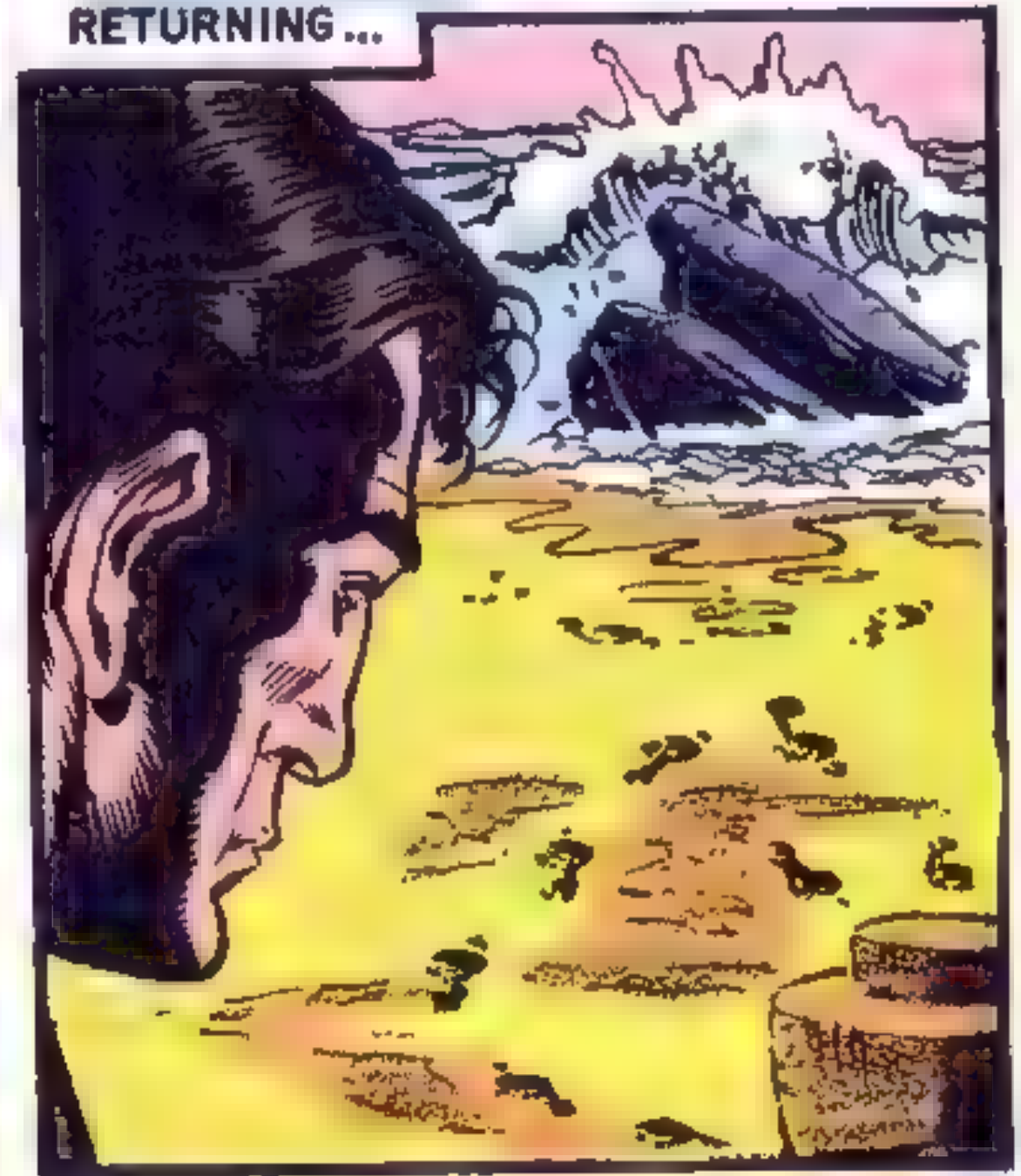
PEOPLE GROW. I HAVE GROWN. BUT SHE HAS NOT CHANGED. SHE IS STILL SMALL. DEATH DOES NOT PERMIT GROWTH OR CHANGE. SHE STILL HAS GOLDEN HAIR. SHE WILL BE FOREVER YOUNG AND I WILL LOVE HER FOREVER, OH GOD, I WILL LOVE HER FOREVER.



THE LIFEGUARD TIED UP THE SACK. I WALKED BY MYSELF, DOWN THE BEACH, DOWN TOWARD WHERE HE'D FOUND HER. THERE, AT THE WATER'S EDGE, LAY A SAND CASTLE, ONLY HALF-BUILT...



JUST LIKE TALLY AND I USED TO BUILD THEM. SHE HALF.. AND I HALF. I LOOKED AT IT. I KNELT BESIDE IT AND I SAW THE LITTLE PRINTS OF FEET COMING IN FROM THE LAKE AND GOING BACK OUT TO THE LAKE AGAIN AND NOT EVER RETURNING...



AND THEN... I KNEW...

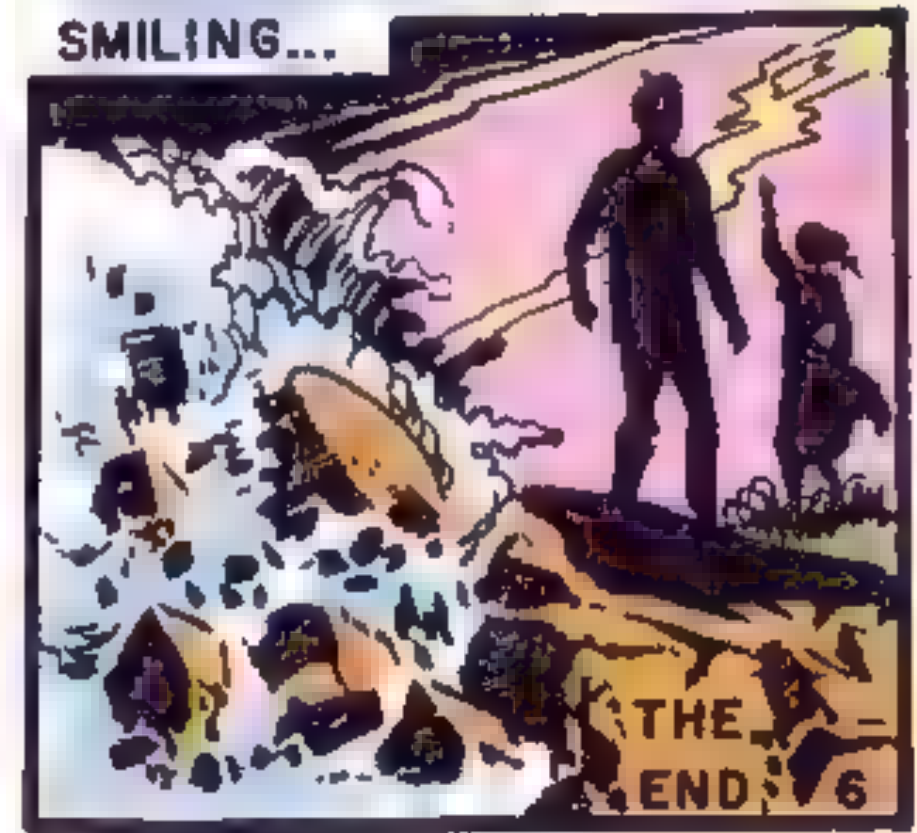
I'LL... HELP YOU FINISH IT, TALLY...



I DID. I BUILT THE REST OF IT UP VERY SLOWLY, THEN AROSE...



... AND TURNED AWAY AND WALKED OFF, SO AS NOT TO WATCH IT CRUMBLE IN THE WAVES THE WAY ALL THINGS CRUMBLE. I WALKED BACK UP THE BEACH TO WHERE A STRANGE WOMAN NAMED MARGARET WAITED FOR ME, SMILING...



THE END 6

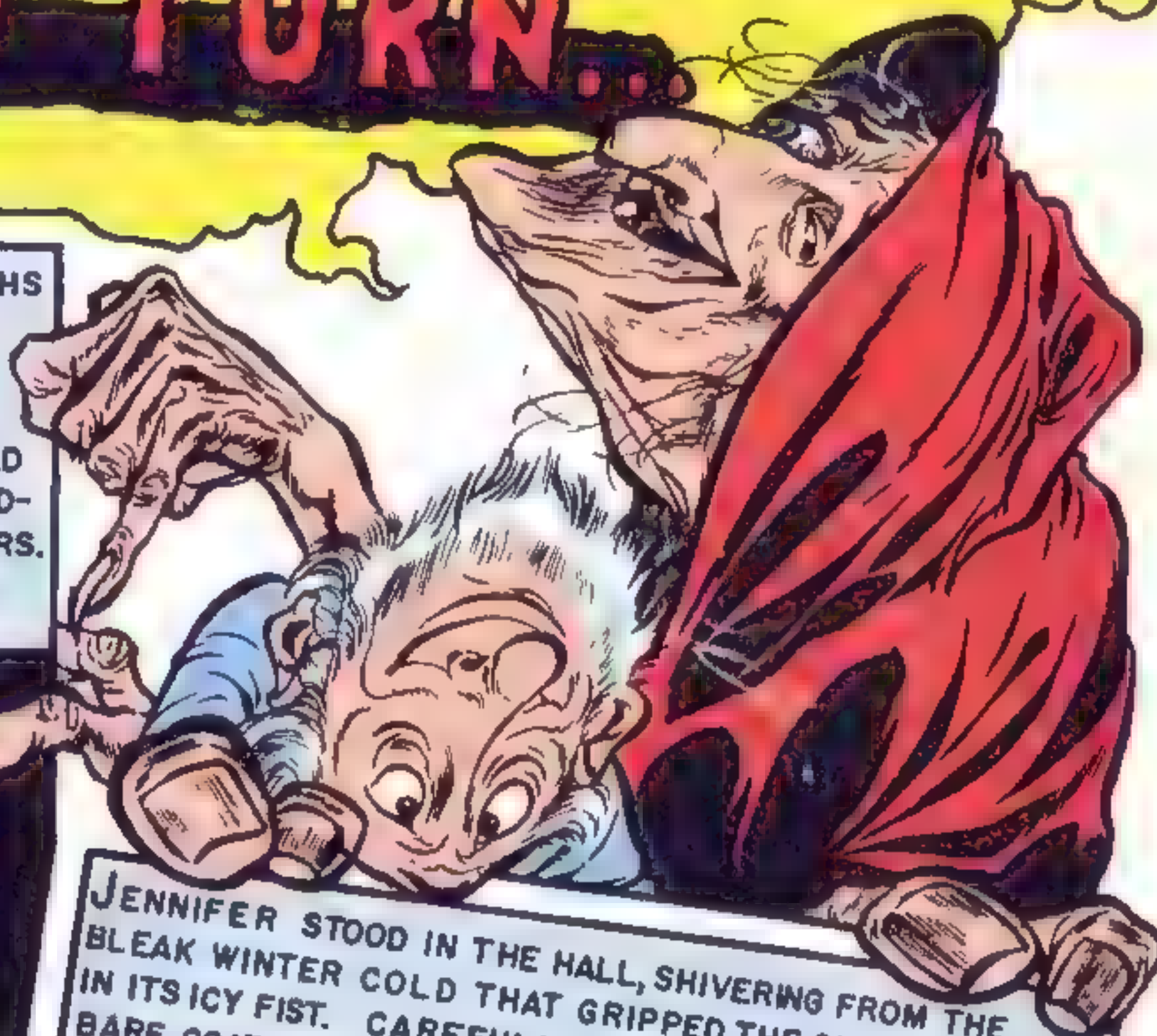
THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!

HEE, HEE! AND NOW IT'S WIND-UP TIME IN V.K.'S MAG, AND SO AS NOT TO DISAPPOINT ANY OF YOU HUNGRY GHOULS WHO STILL HAVEN'T SATISFIED YOUR APPETITE FOR HORROR, YOUR HOSTESS IN THE HAUNT OF FEAR, THE OLD WITCH, WILL NOW SLING SLIME. THIS DISGUSTING DELVING INTO DELIRIUM IS A FAVORITE CAULDRON CONCOCTION OF MINE, GUARANTEED TO KILL ANY CRAVING YOU MIGHT HAVE. I CALL THIS PUTRID PORTION OF PROSE...

ONE GOOD TURN...

THE LAST FOUR MONTHS HAD BEEN WONDERFUL MONTHS FOR JENNIFER. THINGS HAD CHANGED. EAGERLY SHE WOULD RUSH HOME EACH NIGHT TO TELL EDWIN, HER HUSBAND, OF HER LATEST EXPLOIT. AND EDWIN WOULD LIE THERE, LISTENING TO JENNIFER, WHILE SHE DESCRIBED HER RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENT. POOR DEAR EDWIN. BED-RIDDEN EDWIN. PARALYZED FOR THE LAST EIGHT YEARS. YES, THINGS HAD CHANGED FOR EDWIN AND JENNIFER. THINGS WERE DIFFERENT NOW...

IT'S JENNIFER, EDWIN, DEAR! I'M HOME!



JENNIFER STOOD IN THE HALL, SHIVERING FROM THE BLEAK WINTER COLD THAT GRIPPED THE OUTSIDE WORLD IN ITS ICY FIST. CAREFULLY, SHE REMOVED HER THREAD-BARE COAT AND HUNG IT IN THE CLOSET...

OH, I'VE HAD SUCH A WONDERFUL DAY, EDWIN, DEAR. WAIT TILL I TELL YOU!



JENNIFER TODDLED DOWN THE HALL TO THE BEDROOM DOOR. SHE OPENED IT A CRACK AND PEERED IN. EDWIN LAY, SILENT, IN THE HUGE ANTIQUE DOUBLE BED...



JUST LET ME FIX MYSELF SOME *TEA*, MY DARLING. THEN I'LL COME TO BED AND TELL YOU ALL ABOUT IT.

THE TEAPOT STOOD IN ITS USUAL PLACE ON THE OLD STOVE. JENNIFER LIT THE GAS AND PUT OUT A CUP AND SAUCER, HUMMING SOFTLY. SHE RAISED HER VOICE SO EDWIN COULD HEAR HER...



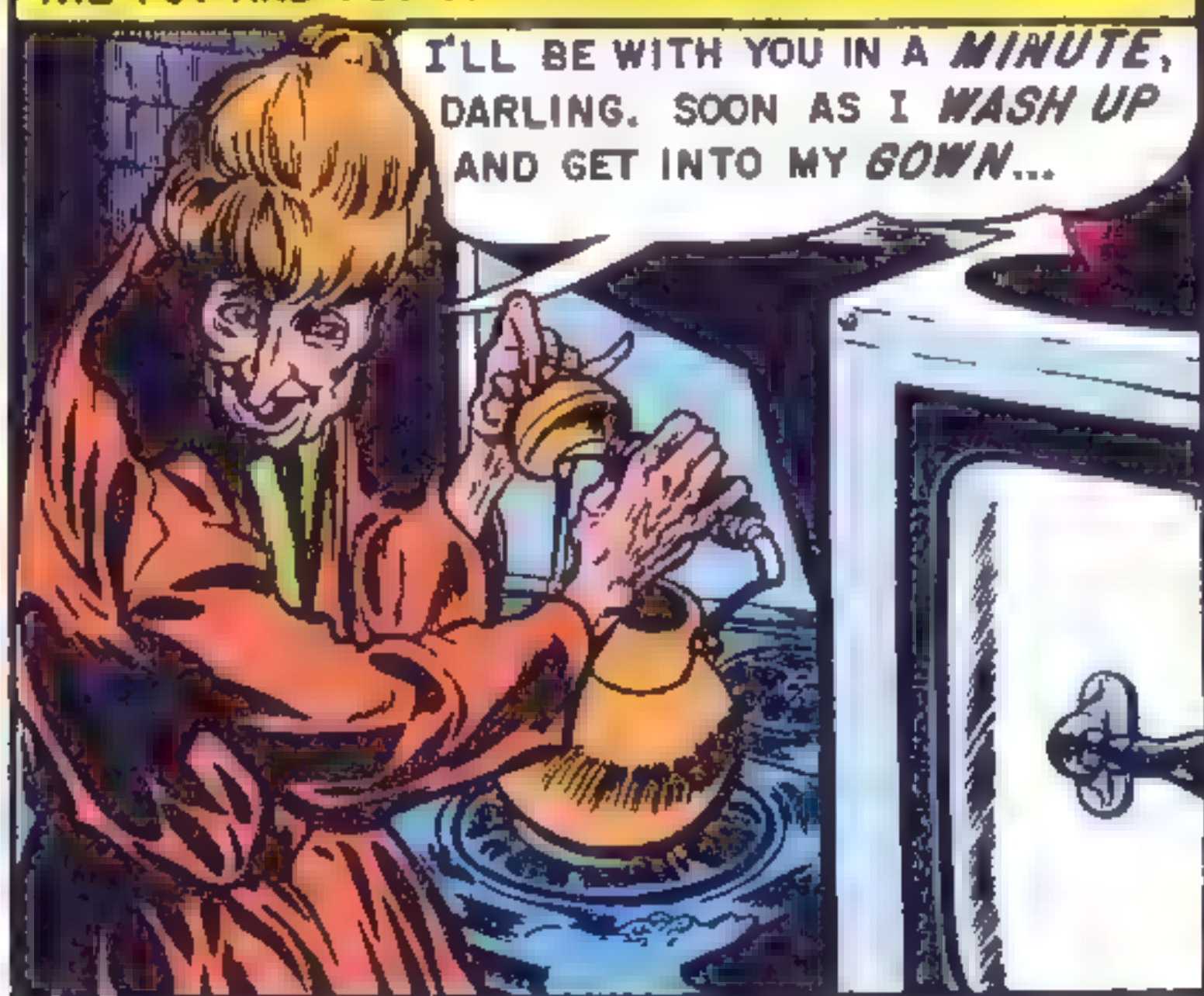
MAKING PEOPLE *HAPPY* CAN GIVE ONE SUCH A FEELING OF *ACCOMPLISHMENT* AND *SATISFACTION*, EDWIN.

SHE SAT DEMURELY AT THE SPOTLESS TABLE, SIPPING THE WARM BREW...



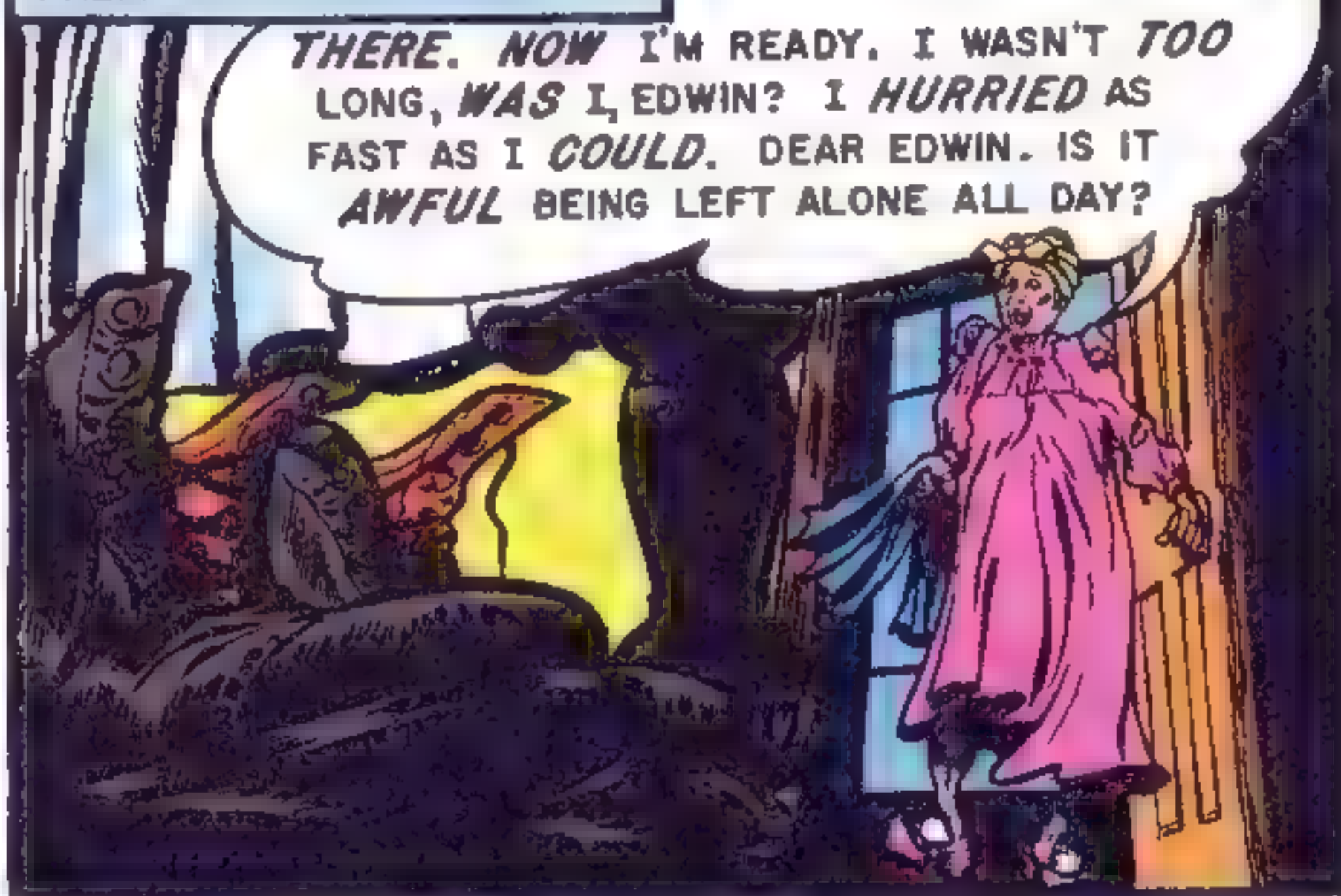
OH, EDWIN. I'M SO *GLAD* I FOUND THAT PEOPLE *NEED* ME. IT'S SO *NICE* TO KNOW YOU'RE *NEEDED*. IT'S SO *NICE* TO KNOW YOU CAN *DO THINGS* FOR PEOPLE.

JENNY DRAINED THE TEACUP DRY AND WASHED IT IN THE SINK AND PUT IT AWAY. THEN SHE REFILLED THE POT AND PUT IT BACK ON THE STOVE...



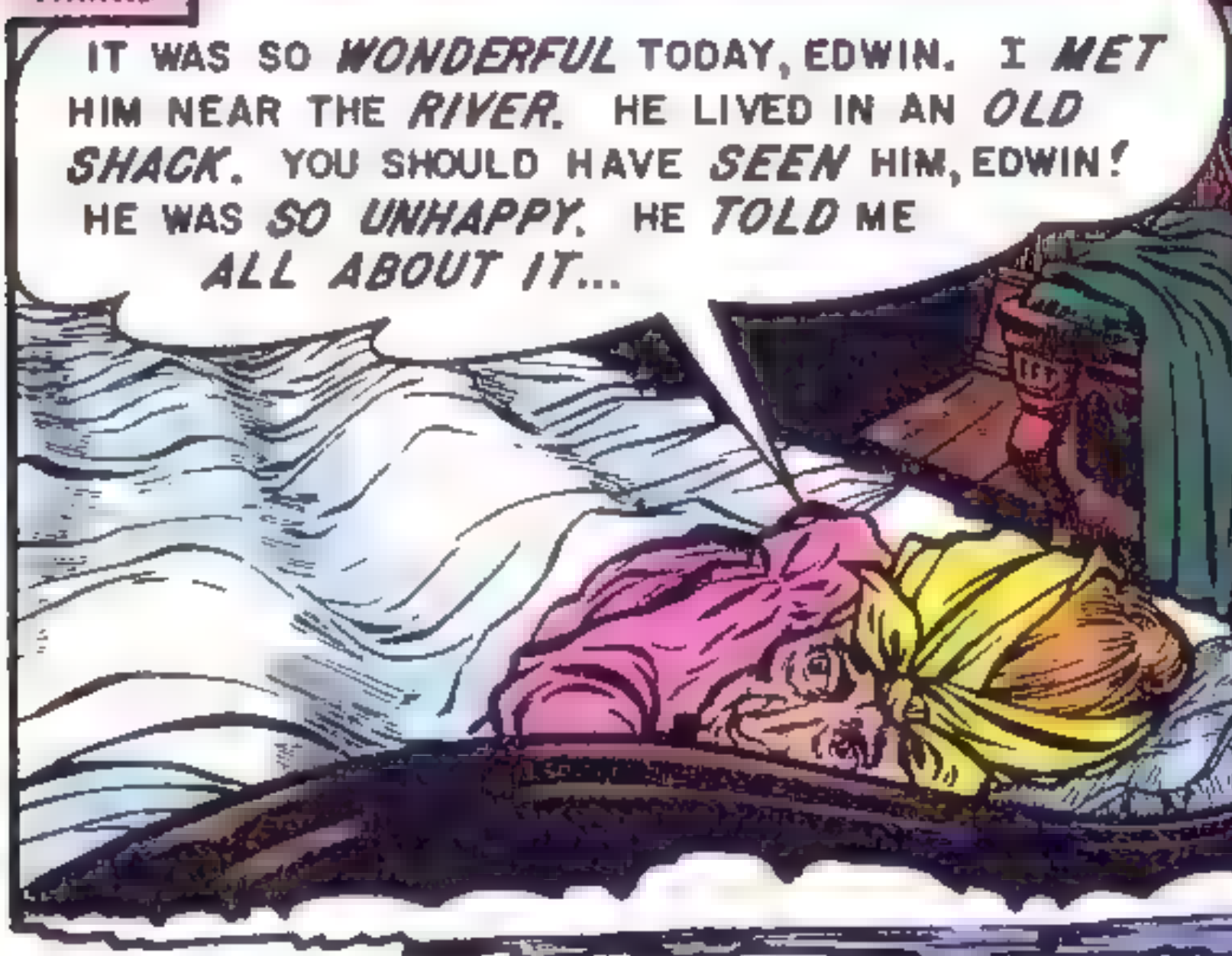
I'LL BE WITH YOU IN A *MINUTE*, DARLING. SOON AS I *WASH UP* AND GET INTO MY *GOWN*...

THE WATER SPLASHED LOUDLY IN THE SINK. JENNY SANG SOFTLY AS SHE WASHED AND WIPED AND COMBED AND CREAMED AND DID ALL THE THINGS THAT WOMEN DO IN PREPARATION FOR BED...



THERE. NOW I'M READY. I WASN'T *TOO* LONG, *WAS I*, EDWIN? I *HURRIED* AS FAST AS I *COULD*. DEAR EDWIN. IS IT *AWFUL* BEING LEFT ALONE ALL DAY?

SHE WAS BESIDE HIM NOW, BETWEEN COOL SHEETS, SNUGLING UP TO HIM, STROKING HIS HAIR, KISSING HIM...

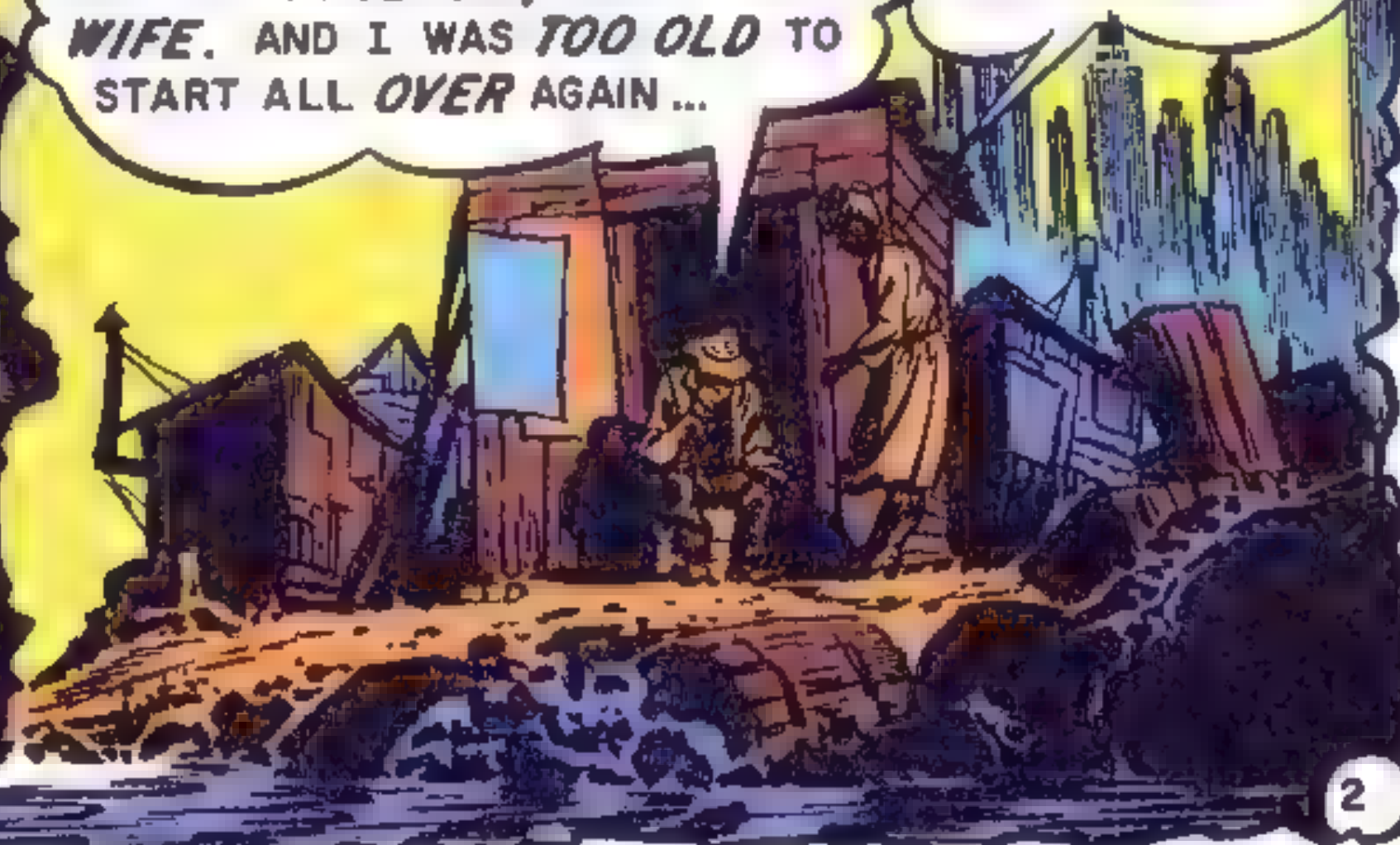


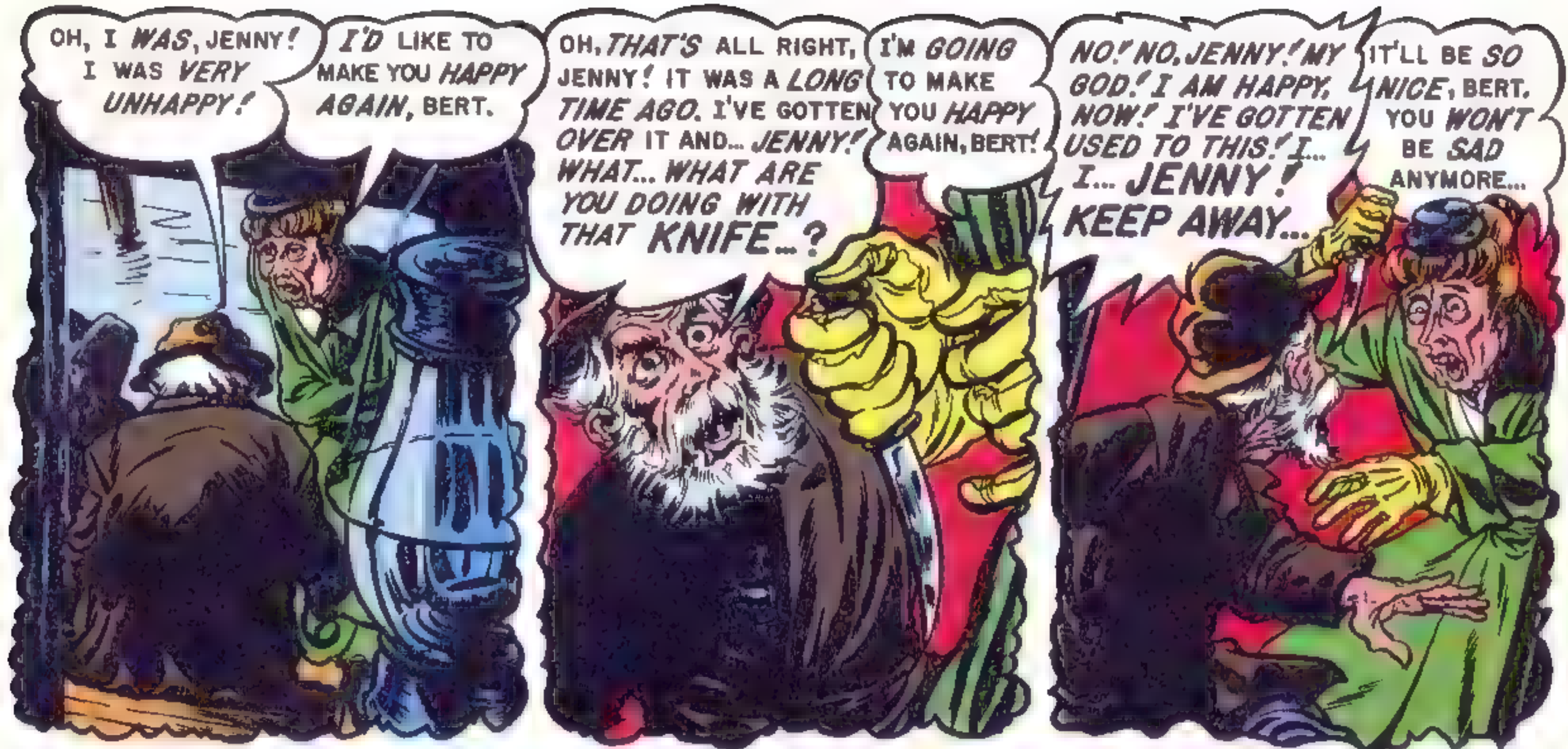
IT WAS SO *WONDERFUL* TODAY, EDWIN. I *MET* HIM NEAR THE *RIVER*. HE LIVED IN AN *OLD SHACK*. YOU SHOULD HAVE *SEEN* HIM, EDWIN! HE WAS SO *UNHAPPY*. HE *TOLD* ME ALL ABOUT IT...

'HIS NAME WAS *BERTRUM*. I *CALLED* HIM *BERT*. HE TOLD ME HOW, ONCE UPON A TIME, HE'D BEEN *RICH...VERY RICH...*

BUT THEN I *LOST* IT ALL, JENNY! THE *CRASH*, YOU KNOW. AND I *LOST* MY *FRIENDS*, TOO. AND MY *WIFE*. AND I WAS *TOO OLD* TO START ALL OVER AGAIN...

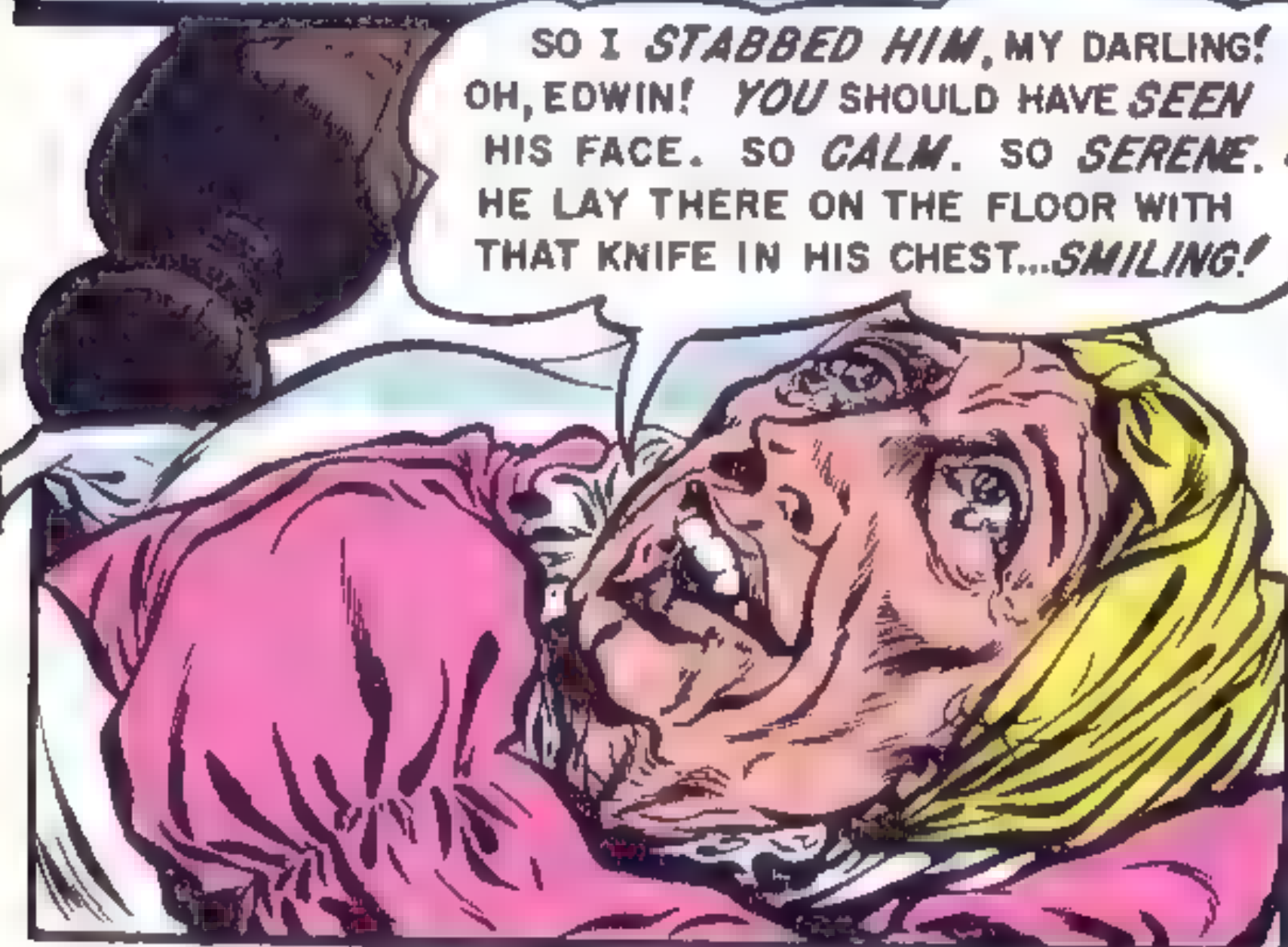
POOR BERT. YOU MUST BE *VERY UNHAPPY!*





JENNY SIGHED AND SMILED. HER EYES FILLED WITH TEARS. SHE STROKED EDWIN'S CHEEK...

SO I STABBED HIM, MY DARLING! OH, EDWIN! YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN HIS FACE. SO CALM. SO SERENE. HE LAY THERE ON THE FLOOR WITH THAT KNIFE IN HIS CHEST...SMILING!



'I MADE SOMEONE *HAPPY* TODAY, EDWIN. ARE YOU PROUD OF ME? REMEMBER *GRACE*? *GRACE* WAS HER NAME, WASN'T IT? SHE WAS *CRYING* WHEN I MET HER. I TOLD YOU ABOUT *GRACE*, EDWIN. REMEMBER?...

SOMETHING *WRONG*, MY DEAR? CAN I HELP YOU?

SOB...SOB... LEAVE ME ALONE! PLEASE! GO AWAY!



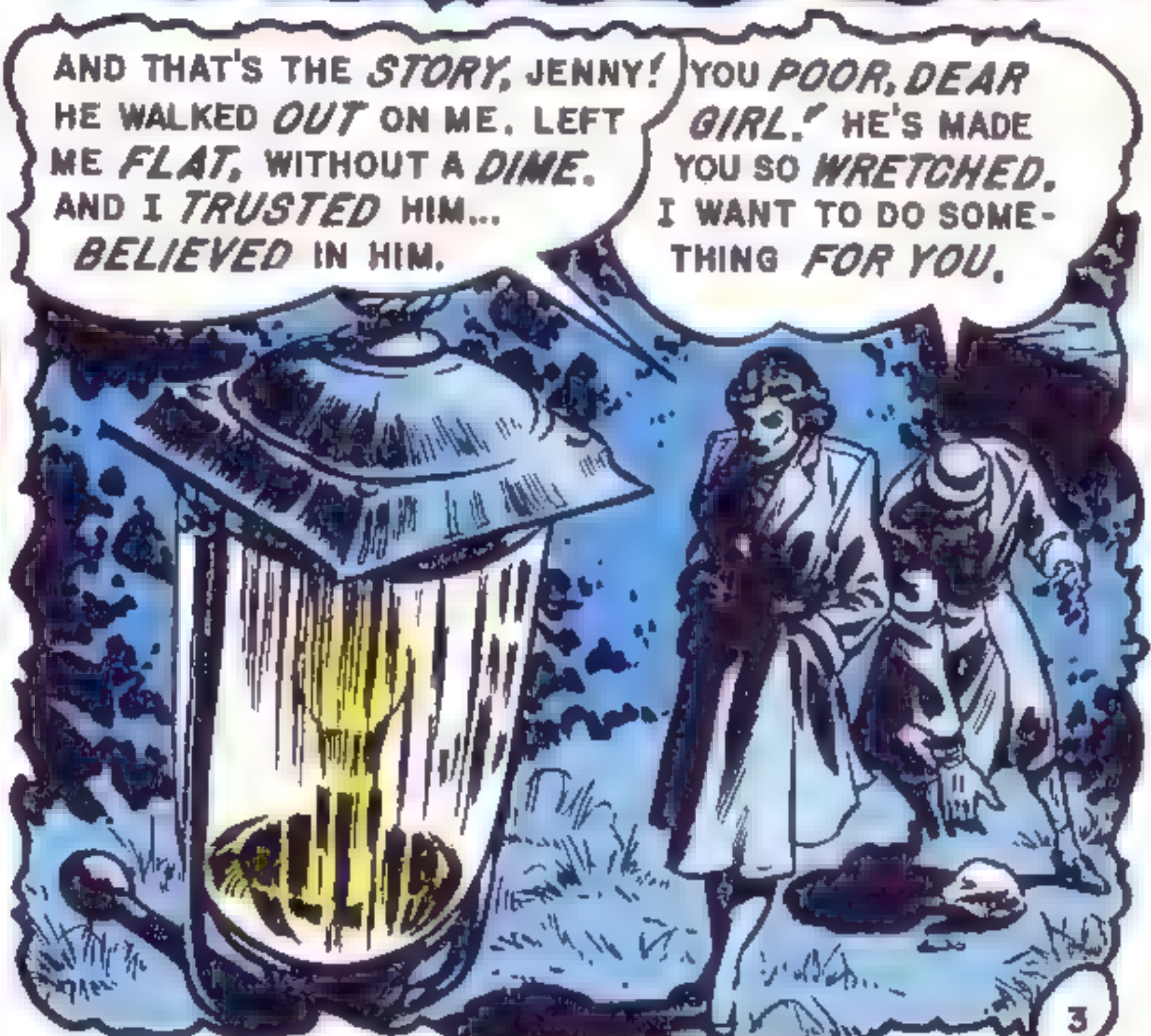
COME, MY DEAR. LET'S TAKE A WALK! YOU'LL TELL ME ALL ABOUT IT!

REALLY...SOB. ALL I WANT IS TO BE LEFT ALONE...SOB...



AND THAT'S THE *STORY*, JENNY! HE WALKED *OUT* ON ME. LEFT ME *FLAT*, WITHOUT A *DIME*. AND I TRUSTED HIM... BELIEVED IN HIM.

YOU POOR, DEAR GIRL! HE'S MADE YOU SO *WRETCHED*. I WANT TO DO SOMETHING FOR YOU.





WHAT CAN YOU DO, JENNY? IT'S MY PROBLEM. I'LL JUST HAVE TO GET OVER...
JENNY! MY GOD!

THIS IS WHAT I CAN DO, GRACE... I CAN MAKE YOU HAPPY AGAIN...



'THE ROCK LYING ON THE DESERTED PATH IN THE PARK MADE EVERYTHING SO EASY. I BROUGHT IT DOWN ON GRACE'S SKULL AGAIN AND AGAIN UNTIL SHE SMILED AS THE BLOOD GURGLED FROM HER LIPS...'

NOW... GRACE... NOW YOU'RE HAPPY!



'AND SIDNEY. POOR SIDNEY. REMEMBER ME TELLING YOU ABOUT SIDNEY, EDWIN? POOR BOY. HE WAS SEVEN AT THE MOST. CRYING HIS EYES OUT, POOR LITTLE TYKE...'

WHAT IS IT, CHILD? I... SOB... I RAN AWAY FROM HOME. AN' NOW... SOB... NOW I'M LAWST...

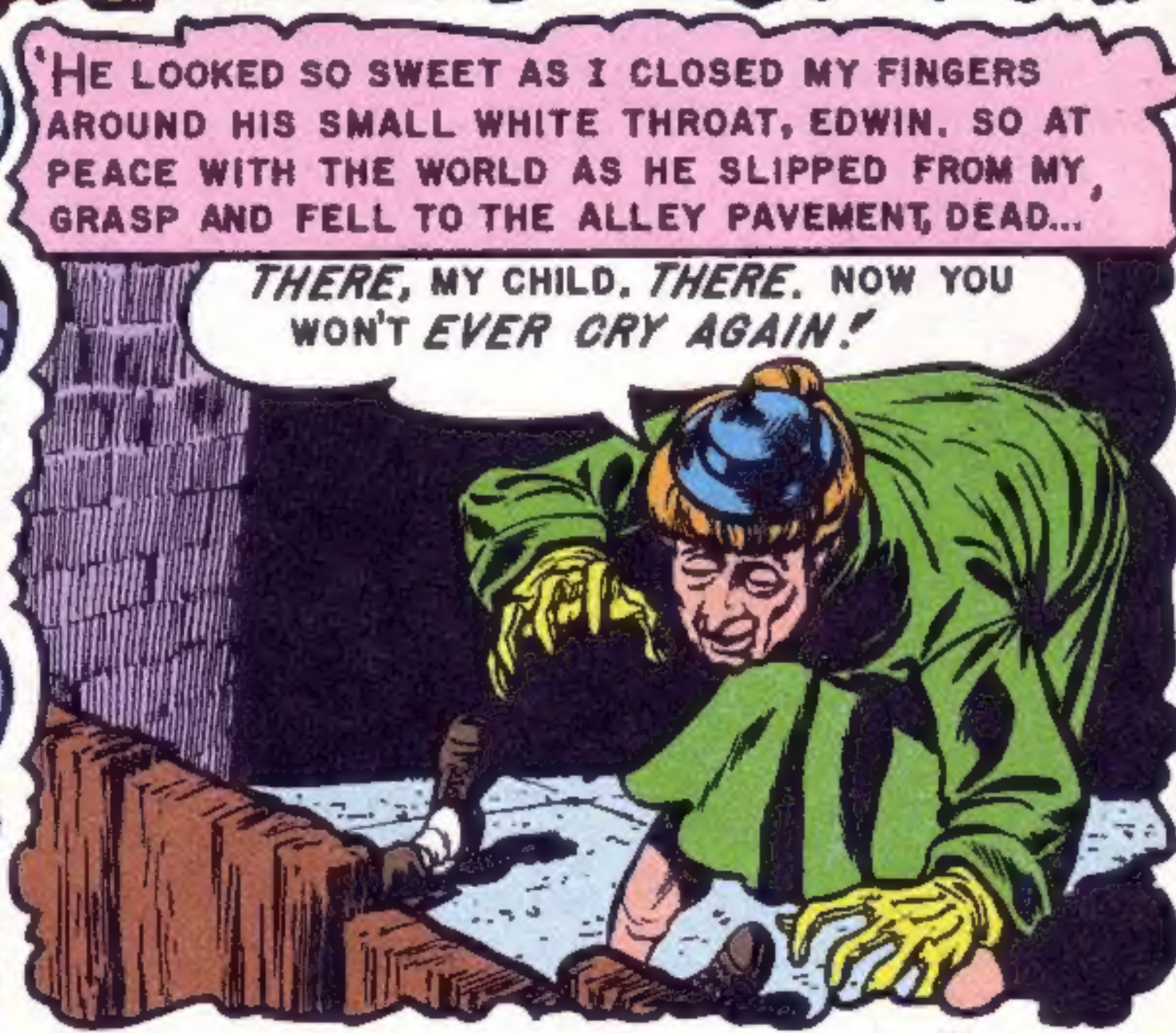
ARE YOU LOST? WHAT'S THE MATTER, LITTLE ONE?



'HE WAS SO UNHAPPY, EDWIN. SO SAD. AND SO EAGER FOR COMFORT. WHEN I TOOK HIM INTO THE ALLEY, HE STOPPED CRYING...'

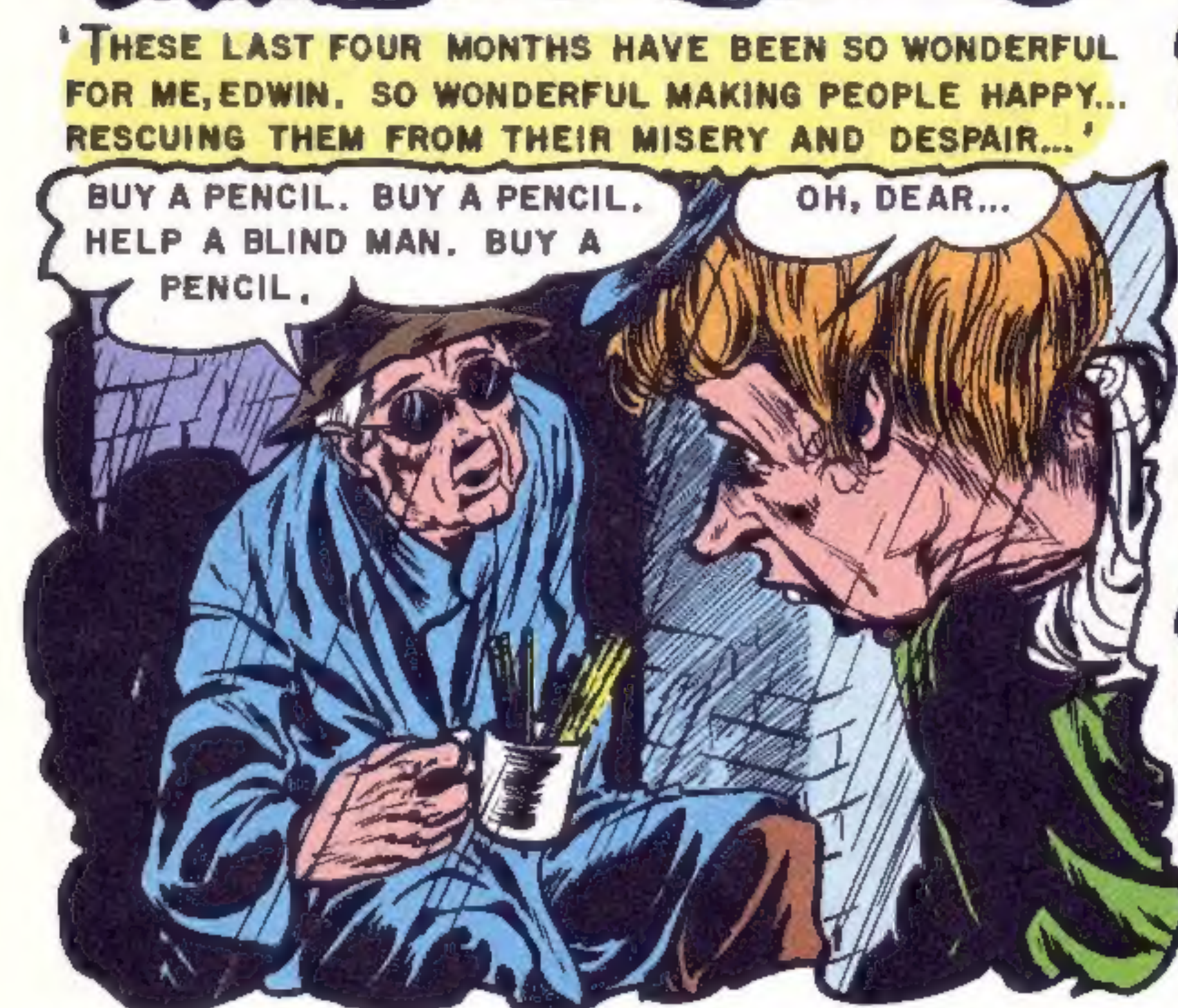
WHERE ARE WE GOING, AUNT JENNY?

TRUST ME, SIDNEY. I'M GOING TO MAKE YOU HAPPY AGAIN...



'HE LOOKED SO SWEET AS I CLOSED MY FINGERS AROUND HIS SMALL WHITE THROAT, EDWIN. SO AT PEACE WITH THE WORLD AS HE SLIPPED FROM MY GRASP AND FELL TO THE ALLEY PAVEMENT, DEAD...'

THERE, MY CHILD. THERE. NOW YOU WON'T EVER CRY AGAIN!



'THESE LAST FOUR MONTHS HAVE BEEN SO WONDERFUL FOR ME, EDWIN. SO WONDERFUL MAKING PEOPLE HAPPY... RESCUING THEM FROM THEIR MISERY AND DESPAIR...'

BUY A PENCIL. BUY A PENCIL. HELP A BLIND MAN. BUY A PENCIL.

OH, DEAR...



'CAN ANYONE BE MORE WRETCHED... MORE SAD THAN A BLIND MAN, EDWIN? I HAD TO HELP HIM. I HAD TO...'

ALL OF THEM? OH, BLESS YOU, LADY! BLESS YOU!

NOW YOU CAN STOP FOR THE DAY, YOU POOR DEAR, COME. GIVE ME YOUR HAND...

'ONE MINUTE, SADNESS AND MISERY. THE NEXT MINUTE, PEACE AND CONTENTMENT. SO EASY TO LEAD HIM TO THE STREET...TO GUIDE HIM OFF THE CURB...INTO THE PATH OF THE TRUCK...'

I'LL TAKE YOU HOME.

TH-THANK YOU, LADY!
YOU'RE SO...KIND...

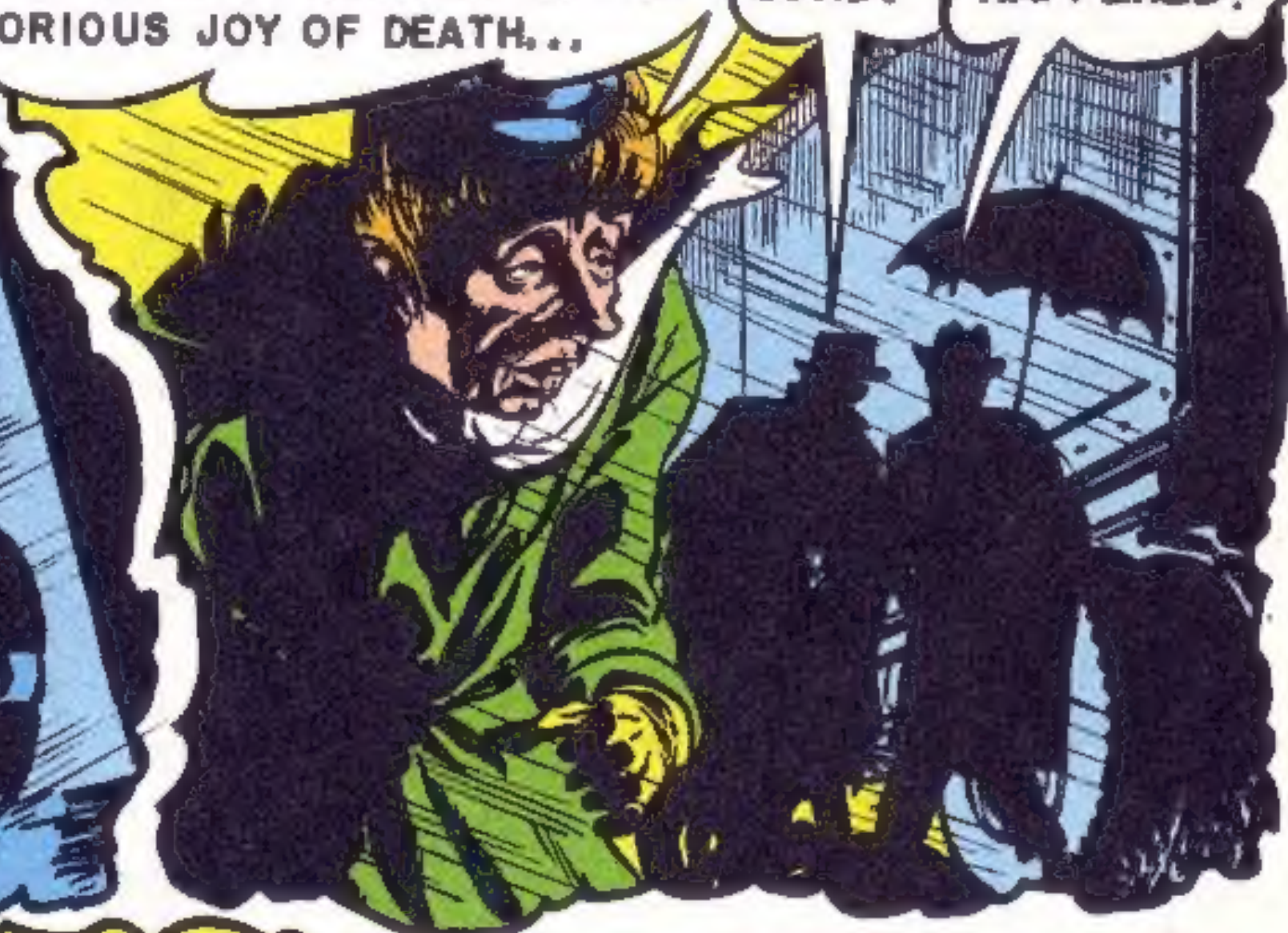


'THE SQUEALING BRAKES. LIKE PEALS OF LAUGHTER. THE ONLY THING I REGRET WAS NOT BEING ABLE TO SEE HIM HAPPY AT LAST... HAVING TO LEAVE THE SCENE...'

ANOTHER SOUL, LIFTED FROM THE DEPTHS OF DESPAIR TO THE GLORIOUS JOY OF DEATH...

GOOD LORD!

WHAT HAPPENED?



'HOW CAN PEOPLE GO THROUGH LIFE WITHOUT A MISSION, EDWIN? I USED TO THINK MY MISSION WAS CARING FOR YOU... MAKING YOU COMFORTABLE AFTER YOU BECAME PARALYZED...'

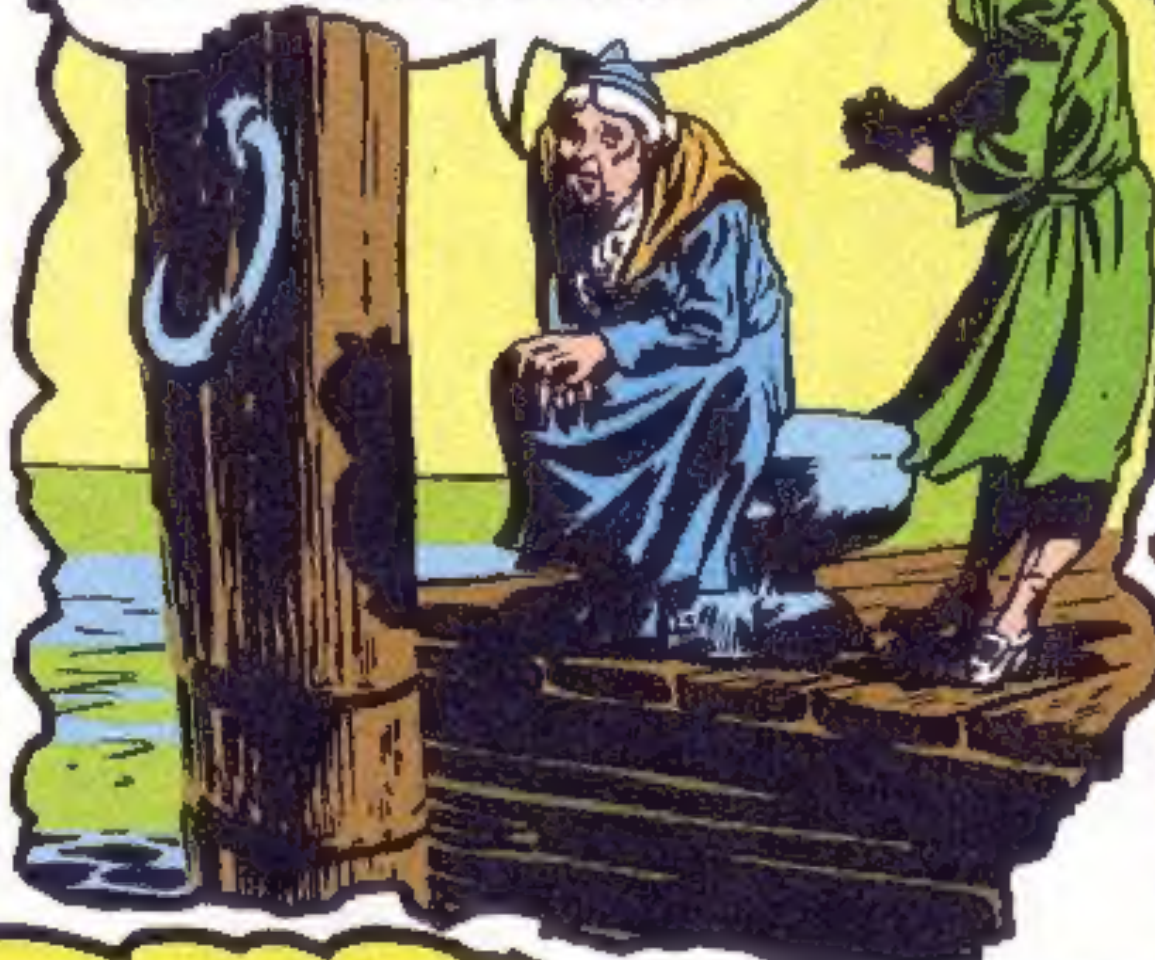
OH, EDWIN! YOU'RE IN PAIN! I CAN TELL! YOUR EYES...



'BUT THAT WAS BEFORE I FOUND MY REAL PURPOSE IN LIFE. THAT WAS BEFORE THE OLD WOMAN ON THE PIER...'

I SIT HERE, DAY AFTER DAY, AND I WAIT. I KNOW HE'LL NEVER COME HOME TO ME BUT I WAIT ANYWAY...

YOU POOR THING...



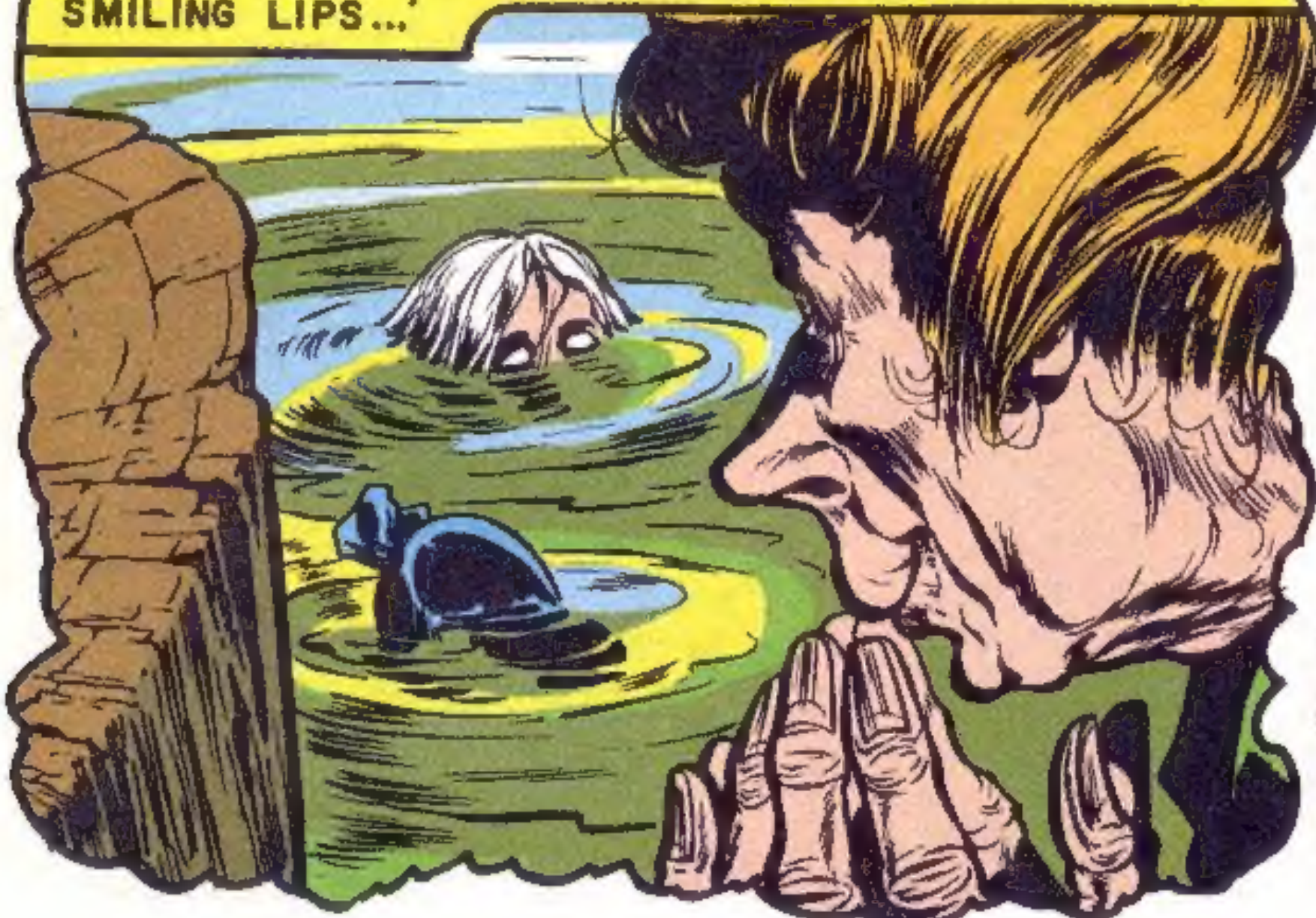
'REMEMBER HER, EDWIN? SHE WORE A GOLD STAR. SHE WAS SO SAD...'

HE WAS A WONDERFUL BOY, JENNY. A GOOD BOY... WITH HIS WHOLE LIFE AHEAD OF HIM. HE...

DON'T BE UNHAPPY, THELMA. I HATE TO SEE PEOPLE... UNHAPPY..

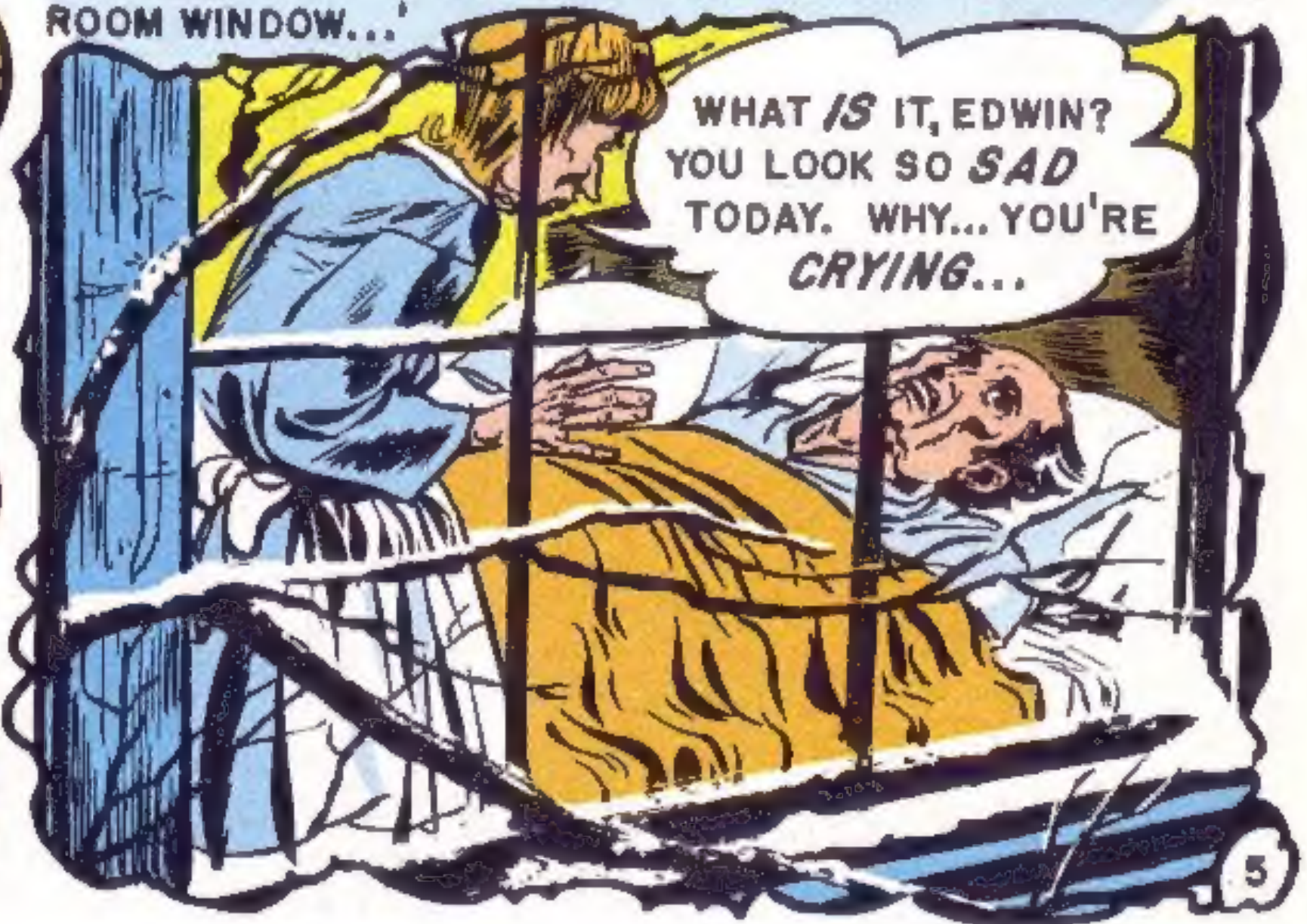


'HOW SHE FLOUNDERED IN THE WATER. HOW SHE SCREAMED. AND HOW SERENE AND CONTENT SHE LOOKED AS SHE WENT DOWN FOR THE LAST TIME, THE MURKY RIVER POURING INTO HER LUNGS THROUGH HER SMILING LIPS...'



'FOUR MONTHS IT'S BEEN, EDWIN. FOUR MONTHS SINCE I DISCOVERED MY MISSION IN LIFE. REMEMBER THE DAY? IT WAS SUNDAY. YOU LAY IN YOUR BED, STARING OUT AT THE SNOW FALLING ON THE BARE DEAD TREE OUTSIDE OUR BED-ROOM WINDOW...'

WHAT IS IT, EDWIN? YOU LOOK SO SAD TODAY. WHY... YOU'RE CRYING...



'I COULD SEE THE TEARS FILLING YOUR STAR-ING EYES. I COULD SEE ALL THE SADNESS AND DESPAIR OVERFLOWING YOUR EYELIDS AND TRICKLING DOWN YOUR CHEEKS...'

DON'T CRY, EDWIN! DON'T BE SAD. I CAN'T STAND TO SEE YOU UNHAPPY.

I KNOW WHAT, EDWIN. I KNOW WHAT! I'LL MAKE YOU YOUR FAVORITE DRINK. I'LL MAKE YOU A HOT CHOCOLATE. WOULDN'T THAT BE NICE...?

'AND SUDDENLY, ON THAT DAY FOUR MONTHS AGO, I KNEW. I KNEW HOW TO MAKE YOU HAPPY. SO I WENT INTO THE KITCHEN AND I MADE YOU YOUR FAVORITE. HOT CHOCOLATE...'

I'LL BE FINISHED SOON, EDWIN...

JENNY LAY BESIDE EDWIN IN THE HUGE ANTIQUE BED. SHE WHISPERED SOFTLY, STROKING HIS CHEEK...

AND WHEN I'D FINISHED MAKING YOUR DRINK, I PUT THE...THE...OH, DEAR! WHO CAN THAT BE AT THIS TIME OF NIGHT?

OPEN UP IN THERE!

THE HEAVY POUNDING ON THE FRONT DOOR ECHOED THROUGH THE HOUSE. JENNY KISSED EDWIN AND SLID OUT OF BED...

I'LL BE RIGHT BACK, EDWIN. I'LL SEE WHO IT IS AND BE RIGHT BACK...

THERE WERE TWO OF THEM...SOMBER-FACED MEN PEER-ING OUT OF THE DARKNESS AT HER...

MIND IF WE CAME IN, MA'AM?

WE'D LIKE A WORD WITH YOU.

JENNY LOOKED AT THE SHINY BADGE THAT ONE OF THEM HELD OUT TO HER. SHE GLANCED OVER HER SHOULDER DOWN THE HALL...

WELL...ALL RIGHT, YOU CAN COME IN FOR A MINUTE, BUT PLEASE... KEEP YOUR VOICES DOWN. MY HUSBAND'S IN THE BEDROOM...

WE JUST WANT TO ASK YOU A FEW QUESTIONS.

JENNY CLOSED THE DOOR BEHIND THEM. THEY LOOKED AROUND. ONE OF THEM GRIMACED. . .



THE TALLER ONE STARTED DOWN THE HALL... TOWARD THE BEDROOM...



THE ONE NAMED PHIL TURNED INTO THE BEDROOM. JENNY SCREAMED...



PHIL CAME OUT AGAIN, HIS HAND CLAMPED TO HIS MOUTH. JENNY BEGAN TO SOB. . .

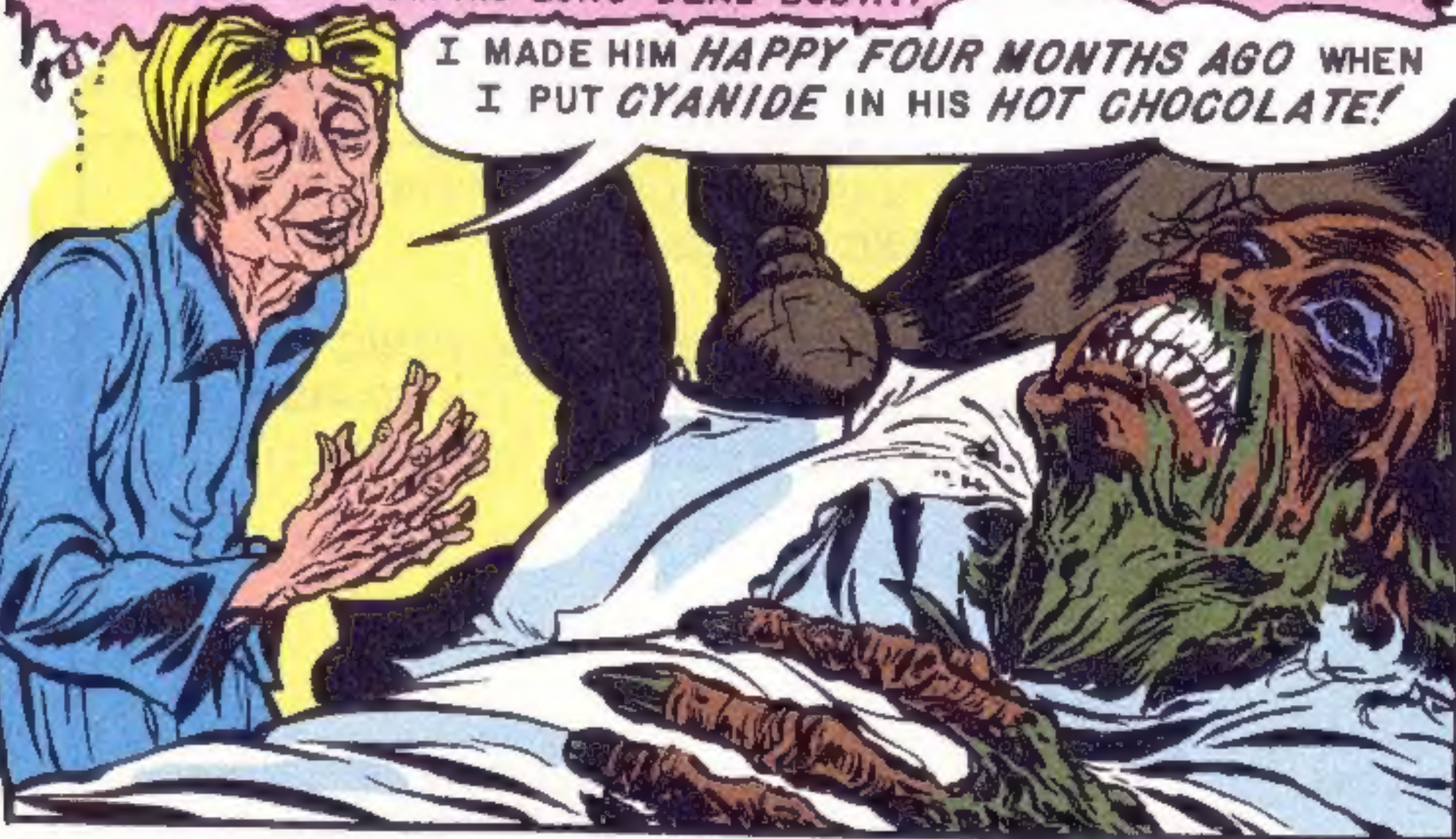


THE ONE NAMED STEVE PUSHED JENNY TO THE BEDROOM. HE STARED IN. JENNY GRINNED...



EDWIN LAY ON THE HUGE ANTIQUE BED. THE FLESH OF HIS FACE WAS BEGINNING TO FALL AWAY REVEALING WHITENED GRINNING TEETH. WHAT THE DETECTIVES HAD NOTICED WAS THE FOUL ODOR OF DECAY THAT SPRUNG FROM HIS LONG-DEAD BODY...

I MADE HIM **HAPPY** FOUR MONTHS AGO WHEN I PUT **CYANIDE** IN HIS **HOT CHOCOLATE!**



HEE, HEE! THAT'S **IT**, CREEPS. THAT'S MY **FOUL FARE** FOR THIS ISSUE. THEY TOOK POOR JENNY AWAY AND PUT HER IN A PADDED CELL WHERE SHE CAN'T MAKE ANYBODY **HAPPY** ANYMORE. BUT SHE **TRIES**. THE **KEEPERS** HAVE A **DEVIL** OF A TIME WITH HER. AND NOW IT'S TIME TO **PUT OUT** THE **FIRE** BENEATH MY **CAULDRON** AND **CLOSE** THE **VAULT-KEEPER'S MAG** FOR

THIS ISSUE. WE'LL ALL SEE YOU **NEXT** IN MY MAG, **THE HAUNT OF FEAR**. 'BYE, NOW!

S-S-S-S-S-S-S...

